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# ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

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# ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

## CHAPTER I

### A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

IN following the growth of a literature, we find ourselves after a time driven to narrow the working definition of the subject-matter. For scientific purposes there is indeed no ultimate dividing line between what the French call "*belles lettres*"—what used to be known in English as "*polite letters*"—and other kinds of writing. Even handbooks of "*literature*" in the academic sense usually deal with the writers of history and philosophy; and a history of nineteenth-century literature could hardly omit Darwin, though that great man is not remarkable for his style. But as books multiply and their makers specialize, the survey of them tends to divide between histories of "*thought*" and histories of the kinds of writing which have an æsthetic or artistic aim. Even here, the separation is an artificial one, a matter of convenience rather than of fundamental distinction. We cannot



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omit to consider the way of thought of the men who write plays, poems, and novels ; and even if we concern ourselves mainly with the art of verbal expression we cannot ignore the development given to that art in scientific or didactic treatises. But there emerges for us in such a survey a general conception of " literature " as one of the fine arts ; a matter of putting sincere thought or feeling in fine form ; and the term " fine letters " might fitly be used to describe it.

It is to this aspect that any short survey of " Elizabethan literature " must necessarily be addressed. It is of an artistic aspect that we think, first and last, when we use the phrase. When there began to come over English literature the change which broadly marks off that of the nineteenth century from that of the eighteenth, an eager return to the age of Shakespeare was at once a symptom, an effect, and a cause of the alteration. The generation which in its youth fed upon Wordsworth and Keats and Coleridge and Scott found itself, as it were, spiritually detached from the age of Addison and Pope ; even from the nearer age of Gray, Goldsmith, and Johnson. It reached out spontaneously to the beautiful free way of writing which it saw in Spenser and Shakespeare, finding there a kind of delight that was not given by the prose and poetry of the eighteenth century, which in comparison is so straitened and constrained. Keats, who so

rejoiced in Chapman's translation of Homer, sounded the note of revolt against a mode of poetry which he (mistakenly) regarded as having been imposed upon his race by the French influence of Boileau. And that revolution in taste has in the main been permanent, though we can now realize that what happened in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not so much a wilful adoption of French models as a development of a kind of literary bent which is clearly present in the literature of Elizabeth's age.

In that literature there are "two spirits." From the first, it runs, even in point of style, to a precise and pedestrian kind of verse and phrase, as well as to a free and beautiful way of writing. The Popean couplet, the prosaic and didactic way of viewing and describing life, the constrained way of singing, are all to be found in Tudor prose and verse down to the Jacobean period; and they never disappear. Only, there is the broad difference that in Elizabeth's later days an inspired kind of poetry and a stately and powerful prose bulked largely; whereas in the seventeenth century the fettered and formal kind of verse gradually got the upper hand, leading up to the general acceptance of the somewhat ill-named "heroic" couplet as the best verse-form; and the noble and beautiful way of writing prose, though it was even perfected by the great writers of the seventeenth cen-

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tury, at length gave way to a simpler, a more colloquial, a less dignified diction. Thus we remember the Elizabethan time as that of a great blank verse, of the Spenserian stanza, of the Shakespearean lyric, and of the large "orchestrated" sentence; whereas we broadly conceive of the later "Augustan" period as that of the neat and cut sentence, the rhymed couplet, and the lyric of short and low flight.

We shall do well, nevertheless, not to make up our minds that the whole evolution was a downward one, despite our keener pleasure in the earlier styles. Those in fact "ran to seed," as the phrase goes. Dramatic blank verse soon fell from greatness after Shakespeare; even the great epic verse of Milton is perhaps more often skilful than inspired; and though Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor remain for us among the great masters of prose form and tone, their way of writing could not without affectation be persisted in for the purposes of Dryden's literary criticism (which demanded his own excellent and individual prose style), any more than for the criticism of life which came naturally to Addison and Swift. Every vigorous age must write in its own way; and all sincere and competent utterance makes for good writing of some kind. We can but say that in moving away from the Elizabethan modes English literature lost something of charm and splen-

dour ; and that to return to these is one of the choice pleasures of the English-reading world.

Much more markedly than in the case of most period-divisions, " Elizabethan " literature divides naturally and internally according to the historic label, at least as regards its rise. Every labelled period, of course, is found to dovetail into its antecedent ; and the first printed poetry current under Elizabeth was mostly written in her father's reign. But between 1530 and 1580 there is none the less a difference as between two eras. Between the poetry of Hawes, Barclay, and Skelton, and the poetry of Wyatt, Surrey, Sackville, and Spenser ; between the prose of Elyot and Lord Berners and the prose of Bacon and Hooker ; between the dramatic interludes of Cornish and John Heywood and the drama of Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare, there is a far more marked leap in development than can be noted in any previous period of three generations since Chaucer. There has been at once an epochal change in verse form, a swift ascent from the Middle Ages to the topmost height of the Renaissance in dramatic aim and achievement, and a no less marvellous rise in prose diction and doctrine from an old-world naïveté, half-scholastic, half-rustic, to a deeply reflective and wholly civilized way of writing and ratiocination.

Elizabeth's age sets in with an almost en-

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tirely new kind of verse. Under Henry VIII, Stephen Hawes, in the *Pastime of Pleasure*, and Barclay, in his free rendering of the German-Swiss Sebastian Brandt's *Ship of Fools*, use a stanza which cannot be regularly scanned either by accent or by syllables. Only in so-called ballad forms of verse, of which the *Nut-Brown Maid* remains the most finished example, is the poetry of that time regularly metrical; the average stanza verse, following the wavering example of Lydgate, has lost the syllabic precision in which Hoccleve still followed their elder contemporary Chaucer; and even when read accentually yields no standardized rhythm. There seems to be a positive reversion towards primitive laxity of technique. But in the days of Edward and Mary there was at work a new leaven, though its fruits were not to become the common possession till the early days of Elizabeth. In 1557 appears the famous *Tottel's Miscellany of Songs and Sonnets*, largely made up of miscellaneous verse by the elder Sir Thomas Wyatt (d. 1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (beheaded 1547); and here we have together a verse that is vernacular in form and substance, and a verse that, for book-readers, is new alike in form and theme.

The vernacular verse is mainly in the skipping or "jigging" iambic metre known as the "fourteener," a form thus far incompatible with either elevation or intensity of

feeling, but lending itself readily to primitive fun, and on that account long to be employed in certain kinds of popular play. Only a radical variation of its iambic movement could raise it to beauty or distinction; and that was not to come till similar evolution had occurred in other verse forms. The new verse is clearly motivated by and modelled on Italian and French example; the former revealing itself in Wyatt's free—indeed loose—use of accentually scanned lines, and in the moralizing pieces in which he anticipates the academic didacticism of a later age.

But perhaps the most notable innovation of all is the introduction of the personal love-poem, the brief subjective utterance which is the prelude to the Elizabethan sonnet. Here poetry, even if by way of imitating foreign models, is becoming newly sincere and newly arresting, in its resort to the most universal of all emotional and artistic motives. The first aristocratic poets have anticipated the precept of a later and more famous member of the tribe: they have looked in their own hearts for their themes, even if they are copying the French and the Italians. Chaucer, truly, had produced in *Troilus and Criseyde* a moving and tender narrative of ill-fated love, besides otherwise proving himself a true poet in his treatment of the love-interest; and in Hawes's *Pastime of Pleasure* there are clear forecasts of the delicacy and intensity of

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passion which flames out in *Romeo and Juliet*, and which specially marks the poetry of the nineteenth century. But Hawes is still tied to the medieval machinery of dream and allegory; and his "Bell Pucell" is most of the time a tapestry figure in an old allegoric romance of dragons and giants, the living human touches being apparently results of a late manipulation which has confused the story by contradictions in the narrative. In the short love-poems of Wyatt and Surrey the poet directly addresses the loved one, cruel or kind, false or true, employing the natural lyric mode of the troubadours, but with a personal spontaneity which rejects their conventions and breathes of genuine feeling.

Poetry has here ceased to be book-making; and the lyrical supersedes the didactic motive. Hawes, with emulous sympathy, speaks of his exemplar Lydgate as "making great books to live in memory"; but he had not learned that one true song may outlive a library of didactically schemed compositions. Upon that innovating stir of poetic impulse there followed, within a quarter of a century, a far greater and more enduring artistic florescence, also stimulated by foreign example, but deeply rooted too in vernacular art—the large output of the eager and fertile muse of Spenser. Here it is that Elizabethan narrative and lyric poetry reaches the height of its power and

luxuriance, reaching out a magistral hand to Milton in the next age, and making possible his epic by demonstrating the poetic wealth of the living tongue. For the first time since Chaucer, England had a poet of the first rank capable of inspiring a whole tribe by his example. English rhymed verse was now once for all placed upon its modern basis of regular metres or rhythms; and between Spenser's stanza and his varied rhyming measures on the one hand, and on the other the blank verse of the drama as finally established by the triumph of Marlowe and perfected by Shakespeare, the foundations of modern English poetry were completely laid within the space of a few years.

In drama the Elizabethan innovation is the most marked of all. At the beginning of the reign it is still in part lingering at the stage of the old interlude; and such performances as the Marian *Respublica* and *Wealth and Health*, and the Elizabethan *Impatient Poverty* and *John the Evangelist*, are very much on a par with the old morality-play *Mankind*, and Henry Medwall's *Nature*, both belonging to the reign of Henry VII. What we call the "Elizabethan drama" might be separated by a whole age from the interlude. Influenced of course by classic models and by Italian and Spanish romance themes, it is a markedly English product, specially evoked by social and economic conditions peculiar to Eliza-



bethan England. We shall see that it was an outcome of a mode of economic and social freedom that was not allowed to subsist in other countries in that period, and is in that respect to be casually connected with the Reformation, wherein the most zealous promoters of Protestantism could see nothing but incompatibility with the world of the theatre.

But if the Elizabethan drama is a new birth alike as to form and content, no less does Elizabethan prose tell of a rapid development of mental life. The intellectual space between Elyot and Hooker, even between Ascham and Bacon, suggests an interval rather of centuries than of one or two generations, alike in point of elaboration in thought and of refinement in style. Sir Thomas More indeed had thrown out in his youth, under Henry VIII, a work in Latin, the *Utopia*, which is quite abreast of any Elizabethan book in the keenness and originality of its criticism of life ; but Bacon's performance tells of a far richer intellectual soil, as it were, than that out of which grew the lonely pine of his great predecessor. Above all, his partial resort to English, albeit with strange individual misgivings, where More had used Latin, tells of more than the earlier writer's social prudence. In the course of the lives of the father and daughter, Henry and Elizabeth, English literature passed from the archaic to the

modern, and English life from the medieval to the ripe Renaissance.

The evolution, it need hardly be said, affected every side of life. Politically, the nation had come within sight of constitutionalism, though an age of tempests was to pass before the new principle was safely established. In religion, it had completed the breach with the Catholic Church, and entered on an era of religious strifes of a new kind. Still in the main illiterate, the common people had now reached sources of culture in the drama, and in sermons aiming at instruction; and the tendency towards literacy was continuous. Perhaps partly by reason of the breach with Rome, England was still without native pictorial art or sculpture: but music to some extent went hand-in-hand with poetry; and architecture was markedly stimulated by continental example. Socially, old soil had been in large measure broken up by economic changes; and industry and commerce had begun to have new outlooks. In physics, William Gilbert, who died in the same year with Elizabeth, had at the age of sixty laid the foundations of a new science in his *De Magnete*; in his Latin, Elizabethans could already read of "electricity" and "electric force"; and in 1603 William Harvey settled in London as a physician, to lay in his turn new foundations of knowledge. And Thomas Harriott, who had played geographer to

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Raleigh's second expedition to Virginia, was in the same period to effect important advances in algebra,\* and, it would seem, silently to rival Galileo in discovering the fact of sun-spots.

Science, however, was only a promise when Elizabeth passed away; and hers, accordingly, is to be remembered as a pre-scientific age, in which her wisest counsellor was capable of imploring an English alchemist in foreign parts to turn his reputed discovery of the philosopher's stone to his sovereign's pecuniary benefit. Literature was all the freer for the lack of exact knowledge; and it is an eminently free intellectual growth that we have now to consider.

### CHAPTER II

#### PROSE BEFORE SIDNEY

IN watching the progress of English prose in the sixteenth century we are made to note, among other things, how it is that nations get their literature. At that stage one of the main incentives to modern writing, the hope of gain, hardly came into play, save as regarded poets who counted on reward from

\* It is worth noting that one Englishman, Robert Recorde (1557), invented the algebraic sign for equality ( $=$ ), and Harriott those for "greater than" and "less than" ( $>$ ,  $<$ ).

patrons ; and one of the most general modern motives to reading, interest in fiction, was but little catered for. Caxton in the fifteenth century, and Wynkyn de Worde early in the sixteenth, printed a number of translations or adaptations of French historic romances ; but the greatest, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, was only twice reprinted between 1485 and 1529 ; there was no original native fiction ; and the whole stock in circulation was small. In the light of modern experience, it would seem to follow that the reading class was also small. Illiteracy, indeed, was rather the rule than the exception about 1500 ; the movement of popular culture set up by the old Lollard schools having died out in the Wars of the Roses. According to the reformer Tyndale, even Latin scholarship had fallen very low before the reign of Henry VII ; and an independent English prose literature hardly existed. The remarkable work of Bishop Pecock, *The Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, written about 1456, had never been printed ; and no English treatise of equal intellectual reach had been produced. Indeed, the English of Pecock and of Sir John Fortescue would have been found obsolete in large part at the time of the Reformation, the first in respect of his old English, the latter in respect of his Gallicisms. And the old romances, with all their quiet charm, had become partly archaic.

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A Renaissance visibly begins in England with the reign of Henry VIII. Ten years before, Colet and Erasmus were teaching together at Oxford ; and for the scholars the accession of the young King was the promise of a new and better age. Politically, the hope was ill fulfilled : there are few more tragical contrasts in the history of culture than that between the large vision and forecast of Sir Thomas More's youthful *Utopia*, and the struggle and mental constriction of his later life. But between the stimulus set up by the spreading knowledge of the new world opened up by Columbus—a stimulus seen at work in the *Utopia* itself—and that of the new impulsion set up by Luther, there set in a manifold change which perceptibly begins the transition from the medieval to the modern period. And the transformation takes places in language and literature no less than in polity.

In recent reigns, prose had been mainly a matter of translations from the French : now there supervened for Englishmen matters of debate in which they had to write and think for themselves. The English which was to be written by Bacon can be seen growing up in the hands of the Protestant Reformers, who are typified by Tyndale, the translator of the New Testament. They had, in fact, the strongest motive to the writing of readable prose, the desire to make converts and refute opponents. In Greek literature, such a mo-

tive had developed the prose of Plato ; in Latin that of Cicero ; and in Tudor England, with a less lasting matter to debate, it made in the due degree for progress. If we contrast Tyndale's controversy with Sir Thomas More, or his translation of the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus, with the *Boke of the Governour* by Sir Thomas Elyot (1531), we at once realize that the theologian is the more modern writer of the two. Equally grounded with the other in Latin, he is at once more idiomatic and more nimble in his diction, and he is to-day the more easily read ; though Elyot's book has the more lasting historical interest. Such a sentence as this :

Although Philosophers in the description of virtues have devised to set them as it were in degrees, having respect to the quality of the person which is with them adorned ; as applying Magnificence to the substance and estate of princes, and to private persons Beneficence and Liberality, yet be not these in any part defalcate of their condign praises—

even when put, as here, in modern spelling, is scholastically archaic in comparison with the writings of Tyndale, Coverdale, Hooper, and Hutchinson. Elyot wrote, indeed, for the nobility, his aim being to train “ governours ” ; and, following well-established lines, he treats of schooling, archery, dancing, horsemanship, and all the public and private virtues, with the same dignified zeal and stately elocution. His book, too, was re-

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printed nine times within the century, a continuance of vogue not in store for Tyndale. But English prose, nevertheless, was shaped rather by those who wrote for the commons, among whom the readers were in large part biased to religious disputation. Controversy can be made at least as dull as any other reading; but success in controversy is at all events incompatible with dulness for those who read; and in the long-drawn warfare between Catholics and Protestants, English prose acquired an elasticity and vigour that put it for the time, in those respects, ahead of the contemporary poetry. Sir Thomas More, whose *History of the Reign of Henry the Seventh* is written in a nervous prose much more modern in spirit than that of some later chroniclers, did some of his most readable prose in his acrid controversy with Tyndale; and Tyndale learned something of literary technique in crossing swords with so accomplished an adversary. The technique thus acquired was naturally turned to the purposes of constructive religious writing. Sermon-making, from the vernacular and idiomatic directness of Latimer to the careful composition of Archbishop Sandys, played its part in the evolution of literary form. But that species of composition in turn was still subject to limitations of time and thought which excluded it from the rank of great literature. Lasting charm was to be reached only when

men with a genius for style took up enduring themes on which they had thought and felt deeply, or on which their sheer faculty of utterance could expatiate with a joyous freedom. Only thus can craftsmanship become fine art.

Prose, much more obviously than poetry, must always have one foot in utility; and primarily it tends to plant both there. It is the last of the fine arts of which it could be suggested that it is to be cultivated "for its own sake." Even those arts, indeed, concerning which that claim is most often made—music and painting—require some ground either of subject or of conscious emotional purpose to give them vitality. A picture must represent something, to be more than a mere arrangement of colours; and music, to be organic, needs some continuity of mood in the composer. But all of the arts have more immediately to do with the quest of beauty than has the art of prose; and in an age in which even poetry was commonly vindicated as a means of promoting virtue, prose was not readily regarded as an artistic exercise. There is little fine English prose before the sixteenth century. Such work as Chaucer's translation of Boethius, and the discourses of the earnest mystic Richard Rolle of Hampole, perhaps represent best in the previous ages the possibilities of prose harmony. But as art in some small degree must enter into



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every process of intellectual construction, the concern for charm, so manifest in much medieval Latin, could not be for ever excluded from prose diction ; and it is already manifest in at least one chronicler of the age of Henry VIII.

Roger Ascham, in his *Scholemaster*, published in his old age (1576), girds sharply at the "indenture English," "strange and inkhorn terms," "words heaped one upon another," and "many sentences of one meaning clouted up together," in the prose of the chronicler Edward Hall ; and it cannot be denied that the criticism has foundation. But it ignores the finer qualities of Hall's writing. Ascham had very little sense of literary beauty. His own verse, in the *Scholemaster*, is execrable, and his prose never concerns itself with any finer art than that of clear statement ; save where he develops the trick of antithetic clauses which was to become an affliction in the hands of John Lilly soon afterwards. This fashion made for form as against formlessness, but it soon becomes more irritating than even tautology. Hall had the sense of beauty which Ascham lacked ; and his prose, if mannered and laboured, is sometimes nobly harmonious. A good example of his statelier manner occurs in his account of the end of Henry VI :

The dead corpse of King Henry, with bills and glaives pompously (if you call that a funeral pomp),

was conveyed from the Tower to the church of Saint Paul, and there laid on a bier, where it lay the space of an whole day ; and the next day, without priests or clerk, torch or taper, singing or saying, it was conveyed to the monastery of Chertsey, being distant from London XV mile, and there was buried, but after he was removed to Windsor, and there in a new vault newly intumilate. . . .

King Henry was of stature goodly, of body slender, to which proportion all other members were correspondent : his face beautiful, in the which continually was resident the bounty of mind with which he was inwardly endued. He did abhor of his own nature all the vices as well of the body as of the soul, and from his very infancy he was of honest conversation and pure integrity, no brewer of evil, and a keeper of all goodness, a despiser of all things which were wont to cause the minds of mortal men to slide or appar [=worsen]. Beside this, patience was so radicate in his heart, that of all the injuries to him committed (which were no small number) he never asked vengeance nor punishment. . . .

By reason whereof, King Henry the seventh, not without cause, sued to July [Julius] Bishop of Rome to have him canonized, as other saints be ; but the fees of canonizing of a King were of so great a quantity at Rome (more than the canonizing of a Bishop or a prelate, although he sat in Saint Peter's chair) that the said King thought it more necessary to keep his money at home, for the profit of his realm and country, rather than to impoverish his kingdom for the gaining of a new holy day of Saint Henry : remitting to God the judgment of his will and intent. . . .

Hall abounds in quaint descriptions of persons, and his pages are at times lit up by vivid portraits, such as that of Lady Elizabeth Grey, " a woman more of formal coun-

tenance than of excellent beauty," but capable of "sober demeanour, lovely looking, and feminine smiling," and that of the unfortunate Jane Shore, who—by help of the narrative of Sir Thomas More—receives more attention than any of her betters. But Hall remains under the spell of rhetoric, and loves to open a chapter in this wise :

When King Henry had not only obtained this triumphant battle at the plain of Bosworth against his malicious enemy King Richard, but also by glorious victory gat the diadem and possession of the estate royal and princely pre-eminence of this famous empire and renowned kingdom, he having both the ingenious forecast of the subtle serpent and also fearing the burning fire like an infant that is a little singed with a small flame ; and further vigilantly foreseeing and prudently providing for doubts that might accidentally ensue, devised, studied, and compassed to extirpate and eradicate all interior seditions and apparent presumptions which might move any tumultuous rout or seditious conjuration against him within his realm in time to come.

The models for this sonorous and colorate style were to be found in Latin, the only refined prose with which English scholars were yet familiar ; indeed, for the reign of Henry VII, Hall does little more than translate Polydore Vergil, the standard authority. But he is relatively much more ponderous than Polydore, as he is less alive than More ; and what was too ornate and prolix for a scholar like Ascham could not well become a popular art. To make a true native prose

there were needed other motives than the love of stateliness and sonority; and to supply it there were needed other exercises than historical narrative. And the required influences were in large measure supplied by what was for half a century in England the chief theme for prose writing and reading— theological controversy. From that not very promising quarter came an amount of intellectual and literary stimulus which has not been fully recognized. In England, as in Germany, the Reformation controversy gave a new abundance of employment to printers, who in turn naturally favoured the Protestantism that gave them work; and the multiplication of printers and printing-presses was a new invitation to literary activity, which it facilitated. In Italy, indeed, there was an abundant literature before and apart from theological controversy; but in Germany and England the Reformation was the gateway to letters for the mass of the people. In the latter days of Elizabeth, readers and printers must have multiplied to fully thrice the number that existed under Henry VIII.

The same interest, turned to the purposes of narrative, elicited the vast work of Fox, *The Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs*. Swelled by controversial purpose into a historico-controversial survey of all ecclesiastical history, this compilation (1563–70) not only won wide popularity in its own day, but re-

mained one of the most familiar of Elizabethan prose books down till the nineteenth century. Here we have an abundant and scholarly vocabulary (Fox avowedly would have preferred to write in Latin, as he had done in his earlier editions), handled, however, with a business-like concern for edification rather than with an eye to literary charm ; so that the effect is one of a general alacrity of movement. Not very trustworthy as history, the book is good English. Ascham could have found no fault with it, shunning as it did the faults of Hall. And yet another serious interest, at work before the advent of Elizabeth, and widely expanded in her time, served to quicken diction, even as it did to attract readers. In the writings and translations of Richard Eden, the cosmographer, of which his treatise *Of the Newe India* (1553) is the first, we realize the virtue of precise narrative as a determinant of prose form. In his prefaces, writing at large, Eden is ill-girt and voluble, his style running to shapeless sentences and loose constructions. In his narrative, following or translating foreign testimonies, he is concise, plain, and perspicuous, yet with a breadth of phrase that at times attains to poetry, and yields a foretaste of that stately and felicitous diction which we rank *par excellence* as Elizabethan. It has for us that benefit of remoteness which is the special charm of long bygone art ; but

also that of diction still unhackneyed. For instance :

But let us entreat somewhat of the particulars of the regions. In the province of Caizcima, within the great gulf of the beginning, there is a great cave in a hollow rock under the root of a high mountain, about two furlongs from the sea. The entry of this cave is not much unlike the doors of a great temple, being very large and turning many ways. Andreas Moralis the shipmaster, at the commandment of the governor, tempted to search the cave with the smallest vessels. He saith that by certain privy ways many rivers have concourse to this cave as it were to a sink or channel. After the experience hereof, they ceased to marvel whither other rivers ran, which coming fourscore and ten miles were swallowed up, so that they appeared no more, nor yet fell into the sea by any knownen ways. Now therefore they suppose that rivers swallowed up by the stony places of that mountain fall into this cave. As the shipmaster entered into the cave his ship was almost swallowed. For he saith that there are many whirlpools or risings or boilings of the water, which make a violent conflict and horrible roaring, one encountering the other. Also many huge holes and hollow places. So that what on the one side with the whirlpools, and on the other side with the boiling of the water, his ship was long in manner tossed up and down like a ball. It greatly repented him that he had entered, yet knew he no way how to come forth. He now wandered in the darkness, as well for the obscurity of the cave into the which he was far entered, as also in that in it were thick clouds engendered of the moist vapours proceeding of the conflict of the waters which with great violence fall into the cave on every side. He compareth the noise of these waters to the fall of the famous river of Nilus from the mountains of Ethyope. They were all so deaf that one could not hear what another said.

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But at the length with great danger and fear he came forth of the cave as it had been out of hell.

Thus does he tell of the wonders of the golden tree ; of which the root " extendeth to the centre of the earth and there taketh nourishment of increase " ; of the marvellous great fish Matum, who is " slow of moving, of condition meek, gentle, associable, and loving to mankind, and of a marvellous sense of memorie, as are the elephant or the delphin " ; and of the city of Tyrma in the Fortunate Isles, " builded upon a high rock, from the which many were wont with joyful minds and songs to cast themselves down headlong, being persuaded by their priests that the souls of all such as so died for the love of Tyrma should thereby enjoy eternal felicity." There is nothing quite so fairylandish in Hakluyt's Voyages.

Thus out of living interests there grew a living prose ; and the nation got its books through the zealous service of men otherwise provided for, well or ill, than by any profit the sales could bring them. Despite confiscations of ancient endowments in the political scramble of the Reformation, education went forward ; and though the successive translations of the Bible were not at all so eagerly bought up as the later tradition has it, their authoritative circulation went for much in spreading the habit of reading, so necessary to the building up of a Protestant

public opinion. Above all, the Bible was the most generally interesting volume then in existence. Here was a whole manifold literature, at once sacrosanct and attractive, rendered in a style which was for the most part dignified, simple, and harmonious. For the Authorized Version is but one of a series of revisions dating from the reign of Henry VIII. Its language and its cadences are those of the sixteenth century, modelled, however, partly on those of the Vulgate, and touched above all with a certain heightening strangeness of phrase through the felt necessity of translating Hebrew idiom with a strict fidelity which was not sought for in versions of the pagan classics. As a translation, it belongs essentially to the Tudor century. The Great Bible of 1539, a result of the work of Tyndale and Rogers, revised by Coverdale, is corrected and refined upon by the Geneva version of 1560, as that is in turn by the Bishops' Bible of 1569. The Authorized Version (1611) does but select from and in general rectify their renderings, frequently, though not always, improving their phrase, but always observing their style. Its literary merit, as English prose, is thus corporate.

What the translation did for English writing was, substantially, to check the tendency to formlessness in sentence-making, by giving authoritative status to a method of short clauses, simply balanced. But prose style



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could not without loss be restricted to that method. Style, like matter, to be sound must be sincere; and sincere prose must always grow out of normal speech, raising it indeed to a higher power and order, but listening always to its instincts. Only thus can style be saved from convention, the "common moth" of literature as of all the arts. But it has been strangely difficult for both prose and verse to escape that disease. Only the masters can combine spontaneity with pregnancy and with beauty of form. We have cause to be thankful if we get even the first two without the third, the search for which so often means the loss of the others. And various forms of ultimately repellent convention had a long lease of fashion in the sixteenth century.

A book published in Elyot's day reveals the persistence of a special taste for artificial form among the upper classes. In 1534, Lord Berners produced, under the title of *The Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius*, a translation of the French version of the *Libro Aureo del emperador Marco Aurelio* of the Spanish ecclesiastic Guevara, in an English even less idiomatic than that of Elyot, the constructions being often purely French or Latinist. Following a highly mannered model, Berners, who had for years been governor of Calais, is much less natural than in his versions of *Huon of Bordeaux* and of *Froissart's Chronicle*.

The book itself, modish, falsetto, platitudinous, is to-day almost unreadable. Yet that too went into some thirteen editions : and when the diction of Lord Berners had become too old-fashioned, Sir Thomas North, who was later to translate *Plutarch's Lives* from the French version of Amyot, produced a fresh rendering from the French of the expanded version of the original work of Guevara under its sub-title, *The Dial of Princes*, which in turn went into many reprints. The thin sententiousness of Guevara had an apparently irresistible attraction for upper-class England in that age, as indeed it had for Europe in general. It is stated by Casaubon that almost no book save the Bible was so often translated and reprinted ; and we shall find his influence strongly at work down till the nineties. The explanation would seem to be that his artificial and mincing style, which made constant play with the rhetorical device of antithesis, and strove uneasily after Latin effects of epigram, gave a kind of pleasure which in its nature was artistic, though the art was cheap and the taste pleased by it inevitably crude. Men and women read by the yard this sort of thing in Guevara :

For there is nothing so hard but it is made soft ; nor kept so close, but it may be seen ; nor so subtile, but it may be felt ; nor so dark, but it may be lighted ; nor so profound, but it may be discovered ;

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nor so dissevered, but it may be gathered together ; nor so lost, but it may be found ; nor so impossible, but it may be conserved, if with all our hearts we occupy our powers in good exercises, and apply our understanding in high things. Right dear lord, I demand of you, what profit is it to the mariner to know the card of the sea, and after to perish in a torment or tempest ? What profit is it to a captain to speak much of war, and after not know how to give battle ? What profiteth it to a knight to have a good horse and to fall in the street ? What profiteth it to one to teach another the plain way, and himself to wander aside ?

The commonplace quality of the thought seems to have concurred with the trick of the style in winning the public. The translation of the famous *Cortigiano* (*The Courtier*) of the Italian Castiglione, published by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561, has much better style ; and there we find neither antithesis nor alliteration, neither pedantry nor crudity. It was to Hoby that Sir John Cheke addressed his famous letter, marvellously spelt, enjoining "that our own tongue should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmangled with borrowing of other tongues, wherein if we take not heed by time, ever borrowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep her house as a bankrupt." What Sir John meant by "never paying" is not clear ; but he had no cause to complain of Hoby, who, rendering an author whose style was easily pellucid, inasmuch as it conveyed nothing that was hard to say, makes shift very credit-

ably with the current English of his day—that is, the early part of the reign of Mary. Its most obvious weakness is the prolixity engendered by fear of new words; and in the anxiety on this score there is perhaps something of undue subservience to the counsel of Castiglione, thus rendered by his translator (*italics ours*):

To eschew as much as a man may, and as a sharp and dangerous rock, affectation or curiosity [= oddity] and (to speak a new word) to use in everything a certain Reckelessness, to cover art withall, and seem whatsoever he doeth and sayeth to do it without pain, and (as it were) not minding it. And of this do I believe grace is much derived, for in rare matters *and well brought to pass* every man knoweth the hardness of them, so that a readiness therein maketh great wonder. And contrarwise to use force, and (as they say) to hale by the hair, *giveth a great disgrace*, and maketh everything, how great soever it be, to be little esteemed. Therefore that may be said to be a very art that appeareth not to be art, *neither ought a man to put more diligence in anything than in covering it*; for in case it be open it loseth credit clean, *and maketh a man little set by*. And I remember that I have read in my days that there were some most excellent orators, which among other their cares enforced themselves to make every man believe that they had no sight in letters, and dissembling their cunning, *made semblant their orations to be made very simply*, and rather as nature and truth led them than study and art, the which if it had been openly known, would have *put a doubt in the people's mind for fear lest he beguiled them*. You may see then how to show art and such bent study taketh away the grace of everything.

But the prolixity is graceful, for the translator has caught something of the finished simplicity of his original. Commonplace for commonplace, that of the Italian book is natural and unpretentious where that of the Spaniard is forced and pompous. It might have been expected that such a book, handling themes of very general interest, would have had the widest popularity; but, whether through distrust of Italian counsels or aversion to the craft of the courtier, Hoby's version had only four editions in Elizabeth's long reign; and the natural style which he cultivated did not win the flattery of imitation. The jingling antitheses of Guevara seem to have gained him by far the wider audience. Ascham, who praises Castiglione highly, and who in his rage at extravagant fashions would have rulers put down "desperate hats," was not proof against fashion in sentence-making, and paid his tribute to the Spaniard in the only attempts he made at style :

For great ships require costly tackling, and also afterward dangerous government: small boats be neither very chargeable in making nor very oft in great jeopardy; and yet they carry, many times, as good and costly ware as greater vessels do. A mean argument may easily bear the light burden of a small fault. . . . A high title doth charge a man with the heavy burden of too great a promise. . . .

And thus you see how will enticed to wantonness doth easily allure the mind to false opinions; and how

corrupt manners in living breed false judgments in doctrine ; how sin and fleshliness bring forth sects and heresies. And therefore suffer not vain books to breed vanity in men's wills, if you would have God's truth take root in men's minds.

Pursuit of the fashion had led the critic into the very sin of heaping up words and clauses "of one meaning" which he had charged upon Hall.

But the occasional Guevarisms of Ascham are as a mere pattering of drops in premonition of the thunder-shower to come from Lilly in his *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, and *Euphues and his England* (1579 and 1580). Lilly as prose-writer has two ruling passions, to be didactic and aphoristic, and to keep his readers stimulated by a perpetual rattle of artificial parallels and more artificial antitheses. By common consent, he did this more powerfully than any of his predecessors : Guevara is somniferous in comparison ; but for any healthy palate any volume of sermons of the age supplies more agreeable prose. Thus he begins :

There dwelt in Athens a young gentleman of great patrimony, and of so comely a personage that it was doubted whether he was more bound to Nature for the lineaments of his person, or to Fortune for the increase of his possessions.

And thus he ends :

But were the truth known, I am sure, Gentlemen, it would be a hard question among Ladies whether

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Philautus were a better wooer or a husband, whether Euphues were a better lover or a scholar. But let the one mark the other. I leave them both to confer at their next meeting, and commit you to the Almighty.

All the while between, the style has gone thus, with the mechanical vivacity of broadsword fencing on the stage; and to the tic-tac of parallelism there has been chronically added a secondary movement of metaphor from natural history, normal and legendary:

As therefore the sweetest rose hath his prickell, the finest velvet his brack, so the sharpest wit hath his wanton will, and the holiest head his wicked way.

The fine chrystal is sooner crased than the hard marble; the greenest beech browneth faster than the dryest oak; the fairest silk is soonest soiled; and the sweetest wine turneth to the sharpest vinegar.

The bird Taurus hath a great voice but a small body; the thunder a great clap yet but a little stone; the empty vessel giveth a greater sound than the full barrel.

Although iron the more it is used the brighter it is, yet silver with much wearing doth waste to nothing; though the cammock the more it is bowed the better it serveth, yet the bow the more it is bent and occupied the weaker it waxeth: though the camomill the more it is trodden and pressed down, the more it spreadeth, yet the violet the oftener it is handled and touched the sooner it decayeth.

Touching the yielding to love, albeit their hearts seem tender, yet they harden them like the stone of Sicilia, the which the more it is beaten the harder it is.

Though the stone Cylindrus at every thunder-clap roll from the hill, yet the pure sleek stone mounteth at the noise ; though the rust fret the hardest steel, yet doth it not eat into the emerald ; though polypus change his hue, yet the salamander keepeth his colour ; though . . . yet . . . ; though . . . yet . . . ; though . . . yet . . . !

At times something goes wrong with the works, and we get the like of this :

Seeing therefore one may love the clear conduit water *though* he loath the muddy ditch, and wear the precious diamond *though* he despise the ragged brick, I think one may also with safe conscience reverence the modest sex of honest maidens *though* he forswear the lewd sort of unchaste minions.

It must have been a very cumbrous prose movement to which this St. Vitus' dance could come as a relief. But a relief it must have been ; for not only was Lilly immensely popular in the upper circles for a generation, but the tale-writer, Robert Greene, found his account in copying his tricks through a whole series of loquacious romances, heaping parallels on parallels, antitheses upon antitheses, stones upon stones. Lilly, to do him justice, had the regulation moral purpose, and added pedagogy to satire and type-portraiture, repeating the standing doctrine of Plutarch, Guevara, Vives, Elyot, and Ascham as to the all-importance of sound schoolmastership ; besides undertaking to convert atheists to orthodoxy by vituperative argument. Above all, he had the practical attraction which



gives temporary vogue to so much second-rate fiction in every age: that of being energetically alive up to the limits of his creative and reflective faculties. Learned he really was; and people without fineness of taste found his prose sparkling, witty, effervescent, "topical." Thus it came about that just before the great period of prose which fell between the Armada and the death of Elizabeth he figured in the fashionable world as the fine flower of literary art. It is none the less his hard fate to be remembered in terms of the invective of Drayton, or, more pleasantly, of the parody put in the mouth of Falstaff by the young Shakespeare, whose unerring laugh so happily immortalized so many of the literary extravagances of his time.

For the rest, the right kind of prose, the prose that can be read with satisfaction after three hundred years, was evolved in the natural way of adapting means to worthy ends. Given something to say that was worth saying, the sincere writer had to look to his vocabulary; and here he had to steer between the extremes of the over-Latinizing school and the school which flouted all new or recent coinages as inkhorn terms. Sir John Cheke, who counselled Hoby, as we saw, to beware of borrowing from other tongues, was himself guilty of the queerest freaks of classicism as well as of nationalism in his translation of part

of the New Testament—freaks such as “pro-sents” for “apostles,” and “mooned” for “lunatic”; and in the very giving of the restrictive counsel cancels it. Other tongues, above all Latin, simply had to be borrowed from, if English was to be equal to its growing tasks; and the early Reformers and the later translators alike saw to such expansion. Thomas Wilson, who published his *Arte of Rhetorique* under Edward VI in 1553, and expanded it in 1560, anticipates Cheke’s protest and lives up to his own ideal. The result is a mass of voluble and undistinguished English vernacular at the price of prolixity and superficiality, Wilson being simply an energetic person with a good education and a capacity to talk spontaneous commonplace at any length upon any theme. There is not a memorable sentence in his books. His unconsciousness of the need for new vocabulary was of a piece with the triteness of his thought and the vagueness of his analysis of his own subject-matter, which he handles with a quite primitive simplicity, having apparently no knowledge of the work done by the scholastics. He has earned benevolent perusal, indeed, by his hearty gusto and his public spirit, which made him a fit Secretary of State; but the laying on of his hands gave no grace to our written speech.

For the building of a worthy prose there were needed both scholarship and thought,

both borrowing from other tongues and concern for native idiom, both concern for edification and that concern for beauty which, in fortunate times, gives loveliness to common implements. Language, like furniture, may be a bare means of service, an ill-proportioned and ill-coloured display, or a thing at once serviceable and restfully beautiful to look upon. Our gratitude will always go out, in both cases, to those who reconcile utility with beauty, and sanity with charm.

### CHAPTER III

#### POETRY BEFORE SPENSER

THE appearance, in 1557, of *Tottel's Miscellany of Songs and Sonnets* marks the effective emergence of what we regard as regular modern verse, with a purely English accentuation. Not that such verse was a new creation: to say nothing of occasional stanzas in old ballads or in the mystery plays, in which accentual measure is happily kept without return to Chaucerian scansion, the brilliant dramatic ballad or duet of the *Nut-Brown Maid*, which dates before 1503, is quite regularly rhythmical, albeit with occasional changes of accent and Chaucerian "e's," and a certain primitive marking of the cæsure. In the Coventry Mysteries (MS.

1468) we find such lines as these, spoken by Eve :

Alas ! that ever that speech was spoken  
 That the false angel said unto me :  
 Alas ! our Maker's bidding is broken,  
 For I have touched His own dear tree ;

where a quite modern freedom of movement is attained, with modern pronunciation. This was presumably the work of a gifted monk. The author (or authoress) of the *Nut-Brown Maid* was also a cultured person, who probably knew French and Italian ; but he handles English metre with a firm and skilful touch, marking his cæsura with a rhyme :

Yet take good hede, for ever I drede  
 That ye could not sustain  
 The thorny ways, the deep vallèys,  
 The snow, the frost, the rain ;  
 The cold, the heat ; for dry or wete  
 We must lodge on the plain ;  
 And us above, none other rofe  
 But a brake bush or twain :  
 Which soon should grieve you, I believe,  
 And ye would gladly than  
 That I had to the greenwood go \*  
 Alone, a banished man.

This duet may or may not have been written for singing : either way it would seem bound to be popular. Yet, perhaps by reason of its very tunefulness, it had no imitators, save in devotional verse ; and at 1550 English regular verse was represented mainly by Sternhold

and Hopkins's versions of the Psalms, in which the "fourteener" was merely cut up into quatrains of eight- and of six-syllabled lines of which only the second and fourth rhymed. It was left to Wyatt and Surrey, whose post-humorous poems formed the main attraction of Tottel's publication of 1557, to effect a new departure by a free assimilation of both Italian and French poetry, in which both themes and measures broke fresh ground. As in Chaucer's own case, the impact of the poetry of a people who were psychologically more advanced than the English opened a new period.

Beyond question, Wyatt gave the lead to Surrey, who avows his discipleship; but it seems certain that Wyatt began translating from the Italian without any clear notion of metre, or at least without any concern to observe it. In reading him, of course, we must remember that early Tudor pronunciation differed at many points from ours; so that when Wyatt makes "colour" rhyme with "therefore," "pleasure" with "erroùr," "service" with "wise," "tune" with "fortune," and "comfort" with "port," he may not be straining his own speech; though when we find "Egypt" rhymed with "writ" we know a foreign influence is at work; and in such a sequence as "troubelous," "famous," and "glorious" we recognize a native malpractice which was continued by scholarly and other poets down to the end of the century.

But in many cases no metrical rules will avail to make Wyatt's verse scan. In Tottel's edition we are tempted to effect it by violations of accent ; but it turns out that Tottel has been "improving" rather than spoiling Wyatt's measures ; and exact transcriptions of what appear to be authoritative manuscripts force us to give up the attempt. At times, indeed, Tottel misses the right accentuation, as in the epigram beginning, in his version :

The enemy of life, decayer of all kind.

Here the manuscript shows, as we might have known from Surrey's practice, that Wyatt gave the word "enemy" the French pronunciation "Th' enn'mi." As regards the translated sonnets and the earlier epigrams in general, however, there is small satisfaction for the reader who reads verse metrically ; and we seem forced to the conclusion that in his earlier work Wyatt had no metrical standards. He seems to have read Chaucer in Pynson's edition of 1526, in which the old poet's measures are reduced to mere "pie" for lack of good texts or, as is probable, through entire ignorance of Chaucer's metrical rules. Out of that text no one could extract any regular rhythm ; and Wyatt seems to have contentedly done without any till he took to making madrigals and experimented in translating some of the *terza rima* satires of

the Italian poet Luigi Alamanni. Even in the satires he is irregular, but he has grasped the idea of an iambic movement ; and in some madrigals written about the same time he at last masters metre, notably in that which ends :

Now cease, my lute : this is the last  
 Labor that thou and I shall waste,  
 And ended is that we begun ;  
 Now is this song both sung and past :  
 My lute be still, for I have done.

In the lines beginning " Tagus, farewell," written in 1539, the rhythm is equally secure ; and in the *Penitential Psalms*, begun about that time and posthumously published (1549), he achieved what is technically his most interesting performance, an English approximation to the liquid movement of Italian verse, hardly again attempted in English poetry till the nineteenth century. And this, like so much of Wyatt's work, is no expression of personal feeling, but a translation or version of Pietro Aretino's prose paraphrase of the *Penitential Psalms*—the literary exercise of one of the least devotional of Italian men of letters.

Thus we reach the curious paradox that the stream of modern English poetry takes its rise with a man of affairs who for years wrote poetry, mostly translated from the Italian, without attempting to produce either English or Italian measure ; then gradually realized,

with Italian help, how verse should be written ; and practically ended with exercises in accentual rhythm on Italian lines. In this fashion did Wyatt compete with Sternhold and Hopkins :

My flesh is troubled, my heart doth fear the spear ;  
 The dread of death, of death that ever lasts,  
 Threateth of right, and draweth near and near.

Much more, my soul is troubled by the blasts  
 Of these assaults that come as thick as hail  
 Of worldly vanity, that temptation casts

Against the weak bulwark of the flesh frail,  
 Wherein the soul in great perplexity  
 Feleth the senses, with them that assail.

But it was not through his version of Aretino's paraphrase of the Psalms that Wyatt was to become a force in English poetry : it was through his miscellaneous verse, reproduced and partly trimmed by Tottel ; and above all by his stimulating influence on the young Earl of Surrey.

That ill-starred noble is perceptibly a man of genius. In his heedless youth he was, with other roysterers, capable of making midnight war on the windows of London citizens with "stone-bows," otherwise catapults ; and then of justifying himself in a versified declaration that he had been moved to that course by his resentment of the burghers' vices. When he came to his end on the block (1547) at thirty, by a monstrous



sentence upon an absurd charge of treason, ratified by the warrant of the dying old king, the London burghers and his countrymen generally forgave him; and in a later day they took his poetry to their hearts. It was with an Italianate sonnet of his that Wyatt's Psalms came out two years later; and the fact that both poets lay marked stress on the subject of sinful old kings raises a speculation as to whether a perusal by Henry of Surrey's sonnet had anything to do with his indictment and execution.

Eager in all things, Surrey had been the warm disciple and panegyrist of Wyatt, in whose verse he evidently found a psychic interest not presented to him by previous English poetry. It came, of course, from the Italian. The abundance of violent life which had filled the fifteenth century, and which had been renewed in the later years of Henry VIII, was not yet become food for either poetry or adequate prose. Rather it would seem that violent action moves the actors and spectators to seek mental relief in contrary states, and in forms of art which call up another order of sensations. Only the impact of foreign culture made notable poets of Wyatt and Surrey; and only in an age of comparative domestic peace was their legacy to become fruitful.

Wyatt's lead, then, was skilfully taken up by Surrey. One of the most ungoverned

men of his time, and qualified above all things to make enemies, he was also capable, as his praise of Wyatt shows, of strong attachments, and of framing verse by rules of art. If we can trust the copies preserved of his poems, he too felt himself drawn by differing methods. Much more often than Wyatt he reverts to the native jigging measure in long lines, so commonly fatal to poetic elevation. In the new verse, again, as did Spenser later, he at times employs the Chaucerian scansion, as in

The nightës chair [*or car*] the starres about doth bring.

But though he had been specially schooled in Italian in his boyhood, he shows much less tendency than either Wyatt or Douglas to reflect Italian rhythm. He had not, like Wyatt, travelled in Italy, the common statement to that effect being a myth. On the other hand, he betrays a disposition to the perilous course of "quantitative" classic measures, as in the piece beginning :

Of thy life, Thomas, this compass well mark,  
Not aye with full sails the high seas to beat.

It may be taken for granted that both Wyatt and Surrey, for whom the old tune of alternate lines of twelve and fourteen syllables was the only regular native measure, were disposed, like a number of later scholar-poets, to seek a less primitive music in various

semblances of classic song ; and some such craving may have underlain Wyatt's early irregularities, as it actually did lead Surrey to create our blank verse. But even that creation was in advance of the taste of the age ; and other experiments of a quasi-classical order were mere snares for an immature art. Not till our own time have any really skilful poets set themselves to give to verse in general, with due moderation, the rhythmic variety which Shakespeare lent to blank verse, and of which some touch was early found essential in the heroic couplet. Verse had to become law-abiding, as of old, before it could be free. The Scots poet, Gawain Douglas, had already, after compassing a tolerably regular stanza verse in his *King Heart*, penned (1513) a translation of Virgil's *Æneid* in heroic couplets marked by a constant bent, doubtless under Italian influence, to accentual as against merely syllabic metre. But though Douglas has many a strong and many a freshly charming line, he also was too far from mastery of his craft to set up a new standard, even if his dialect had been acceptable to or legible by Englishmen. What Surrey might have done had he lived long enough to mellow his character may be guessed from some of the poems in which he diverged from common modes ; for instance, the *Complaint* of the maiden whose lover is at sea :

When other lovers in arms across  
 Rejoice their chief delight,  
 Drownèd in tears, to mourn my loss,  
 I stand the bitter night  
 In my window, where I may see  
 Before the winds how the clouds flee :  
 Lo ! what mariner love hath made me !

There is an inwardness of feeling as well as a subtlety of music here that will not easily be found in English poetry of that century. Thus gifted, the cousin of Anne Boleyn, Lord Rochford, and Catherine Howard, witness of the executions of all three, might with time have produced poetry of a palpable greatness. As it was, he ranked in his day and the next as the most finished and graceful master of the love poem ; and he added to that the more memorable achievement of creating English blank verse, the one fortunate imitation of classical methods of which the language was capable. It was in a translation of the second and fourth books of the *Æneid*, posthumously published (1557) like his other work, that he rendered the service. It is hardly possible, in view of his Italian culture, to doubt that he was led to this experiment by those already made in Italy, which had further been copied in Spain, in a blank-verse translation of the *Odyssey*. But Surrey's experiment is quite individual ; and though he did not live to perfect the new instrument, his technique at its best was hardly improved upon until, when the form

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had been established in drama, it was taken up by Shakespeare. Surrey's blank verse is emphatically epic and Virgilian; and to say this is to credit it with a kind of beauty not to be looked for in dramatic poetry. The opening lines :

They whisted all, with fixèd face attent,  
When prince Æneas from the royal seat  
Thus gan to speak. O Queen ! it is thy will  
I should renew a woe cannot be told—

sound a note that carries down to Tennyson, who is visibly a student of the initial Master. Such lines as

The clamour strake up to the golden stars. . . .  
By friendly silence of the quiet moon. . . .  
Searching, all wounded, the long galleries  
And the void courts. . . .

might almost have been his. The inevitable blemishes of the beginner's work come mostly of undue reliance on the measure of "quantity," and too dutiful concern for a regular cæsura. But the touch is often uncertain; and so many lines fail to scan properly that conservative taste was only too well countenanced in resistance to the new form. Yet, withal, Surrey at the very outset revealed resources in it that his successors were very slow to realize and develop. Sackville and Norton used it in *Ferrex and Porrex* (1561) with less than the inventor's skill, failing to realize the importance of the varied pause

and the run-on line ; and Thomas Hughes's tragedy, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587), which shows no influence from any of the professional dramatists who about that time were trying the form, goes back to Surrey rather than to the tragedy-writers who first followed him. So far, only Spenser, in one youthful experiment, shows any faculty for developing the new form in non-dramatic poetry.

Strange to say, no one attempted to carry on Surrey's translation of Virgil in the same verse-form. Gawain Douglas, the first to achieve a complete "British" translation, had made a fierce attack, in his first prologue, upon the patchwork, translated from the French, which the good Caxton had given out as the *Book of Eneydos*. As Douglas protested :

It hes na thing ado therwith, God wait,  
Nor na mair like than the devill and sanct Austyne ;  
Have he na thank therfor, but lost his pyne,  
So shamefully that story did pervert.

I red his werk with harmes at my hert,  
adds the Bishop, in his rhythmic line,

That sic ane buik, but sentence or engyne,\*  
Suld be intitult efter the poet devyne.

It would seem as if what he called the

Sharp [= keen or fine] sugurate song Virgiliane,  
So wisely wrought with never a word in vain,

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\* Without judgment (*sententia*) or genius.

daunted the southrons, most of whom no doubt met Douglas's attempt with the contemporary form of the "Fools rush in" maxim. But not only was Surrey's fragment left untouched; the next translator, Thomas Phaer, physician, who published his version of the first seven books of the *Æneid* in 1558, deliberately reverted to the "fourteener," by way, as he declared, of vindicating the English language, which had been deemed incapable of high poetic effects. That is to say, he defended the claims of the vernacular in a metre which only a strong poet, as Chapman was later to show, could raise to poetic distinction, and which in any case was as unsuitable to Virgil as it was adaptable to Homer. Phaer's translation is in every way inferior to Surrey's. For lines like

But to the hills and wide holts when they came,  
From the rocks' top the driven savage rose,

we have such lines as

Lo there again where Pallas sits, on forts and castle-towers,  
With Gorgon's eyes in lightning clouds inclosèd grim  
she lowers,

which Phaer thought "a more clean and compendious order of metre than heretofore hath been accustomed." It was possibly the best going when he began his task in 1555; but in *Tottel's Miscellany*, apart from Surrey

and Wyatt, there were represented many hands capable of quite regular "fourteeners." Nicholas Grimald, who wrote heroic couplets, was at home in the more vernacular line, as thus :

Now flaming Phebus passing through his heavenly  
                   region high  
 The uttrest Ethiopian folk with fervent beams doth  
                   fry.

It was doubtless the employment of the measure (in quatrain) in the translation of the Psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins that gave it or reinforced its vogue, and so brought about the completion of Phaer's task by other hands. He lived only to finish the eighth and ninth books, dying in 1558 ; whereafter another physician, Thomas Twine of Lewes, completed the task, with Maphæus's supplemental or thirteenth book ; the whole being published in 1583, and thrice reprinted down to 1620. Abraham Fleming did the Georgics and Bucolics in an Alexandrine or twelve-syllabled blank verse in 1589, but that was no better than Phaer and Twine ; and Robert Stanyhurst's astonishing version of four books of the *Æneid* into what he called English hexameters (1583) could have found serious readers only in Bedlam. The metre was under-blamed by Thomas Nashe when he described it as a "foul, lumbering, boisterous, wallowing measure." In short, there



was to be no tolerable English translation of the whole *Æneid* until Dryden's, so essentially un-Virgilian. Surrey's lead had on that side been given in vain. Barnabe Googe, writing about 1560, praises Douglas as having "won the Ball" in translating Virgil, and avows that

The noble Henry Howard once, that raught [=reached]  
eternal fame,  
With mighty style did bring a piece of Virgil's work  
in frame.

But he extols Phaer as having transcended all rivalry in his unfinished work, which, Googe predicted, "never man shall end." The old measure, thus glorified, was employed by Arthur Golding in his version (1565) of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which had the fortune to be read and used by Shakespeare. Golding, who produced a multitude of prose translations from the French as well as this, is justly pronounced "on the whole a better poet and a better translator than Phaer"; and it was doubtless he rather than Phaer who encouraged Chapman to use the measure in translating the *Iliad*.

The national proclivity to the long line of fourteen syllables is further seen persisting in the *Eglogs*, *Epytaphes*, and *Sonettes* of Googe (1563), who seems literally to have been forced into print by the masterful urgency of admiring friends. By the accident of

large type and a narrow page, Googe's "fourteeners," here as in his translation of the Latin *Zodiacus Vitæ* of an Italian poet, appear in quatrains of eight- and six-syllabled lines, like Sternhold and Hopkins's version of the Psalms, only the second and fourth lines rhyming. In that fashion they go easily enough, Googe having a gift of fluency; but he cannot resist the temptation given by the metre to prolixity. Only here and there, as in his longest poem, *Cupido Conquered*, does he attain a naïve note of sheer poetry. As here, before a line of sheer doggerel :

Great pleasure had I there to bide and *stare upon the*  
*spring,*  
 For why me thought it did surmount all other kind of  
 thing.

The ten tragedies of Seneca were rendered in the same jingle by a series of hands from 1560 onwards.

Poetic evolution proceeded by way of profit from the new ideal of regular metre, crudely realized in the "fourteener," and it was again an aristocrat who successfully innovated. During the reign of Mary a young English noble, Thomas Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst and first Earl of Dorset, was moved by the long retrospect of turmoil and tragedy in English life to interest himself in a plan for a series of didactic poems setting forth the cases of the more eminent victims.

The title chosen was *A Mirrour for Magistrates*. Like most other literary enterprises of the age, this had been suggested by foreign example. Boccaccio had produced (1360) a Latin history *Of the Falls of Illustrious Men and Women* (beginning with Adam and Eve) which had been freely translated and expanded in French ; and the French book in turn had been profusely translated by the monk Lydgate (*circa* 1430) into English stanza verse, under the title of *The Fall of Princes*, with small acceptance. For English edification, there were required English "tragedies," as such simple recitals were then termed ; and Sackville and his coadjutors planned an English selection, copying Boccaccio's allegorical and dramatic machinery. Becoming an active diplomatist and statesman, he had to leave the execution of the main body of the work to the others ; and in due course there was compiled a kind of rhymed encyclopædia of tragic historical and legendary episodes, covering, besides the legendary period, a hundred and fifty years of British history, down to the latter part of the fifteenth century.

All that is now readable with any zest is Sackville's own Induction, in which, substituting the figure of Sorrow for Boccaccio's Fortune, the poet presents himself to be conducted by that guide to Avernus, in a narrative recalling sometimes Virgil and sometimes Dante. At once we are conscious of an

established prosody. Save for a few obsolete words and idioms, Sackville's is the modern English speech ; and his lines are invariably regular. The Chaucerian *e* is done with, once for all ; and the metre sets up no difficulty whatever. The seven-line stanza is that of Chaucer, borrowed from the Italian, and it is managed as carefully as ever his was. Sir Thomas More had tried it in his youth, in a poem which may have suggested Sackville's. As to the poetry, Sackville is not exactly in the great line ; but he has true poetic feeling and a taste in diction that yields at times a fine sonority, as in the vision of Pluto's realm :

Thence came we to the horror and the hell,  
The large great kingdoms and the dreadful reign  
Of Pluto in his throne where he did dwell :  
The wide waste places and the hugy plain.

Reading the Induction, one has a surmise that if the writer could have left allegory alone, he might have been an effective poet of nature and human experience. As usual, the allegory turns to confusion : in two successive stanzas, of really high quality, Sleep is respectively concrete and abstract, repellent in the first form and attractive in the second :

By him [Care] lay heavy Sleep, the cousin of Death,  
Flat on the ground, and still as any stone,  
A very corpse, save yielding forth a breath ;  
Small keep [heed] took he, whom fortune frowned on,  
Or whom she lifted up into the throne  
Of high renown ; but as a living death,  
So, dead alive, of life he drew the breath.

*The body's rest, the quiet of the heart,  
 The travail's ease, the still night's fere [comrade] was he  
 And of our life in earth the better part ;  
 Reaver of sight, and yet in whom we see  
 Things oft that chance and oft that never be ;  
 Without respect esteemed equally  
 King Crœsus' pomp and Irus' poverty.*

But when we have passed the Induction and met the grisly ghost of Henry Duke of Buckingham (the tool and victim of Richard Crookback), who proceeds to deliver his "Complaint," we are soon glad to go back to the allegory. The narrative business is dismally "instructive" in Sackville's hands ; and in the succeeding episodes, by various versifiers, the tedium grows insupportable. Baldwin, the most diligent contributor, was an ecclesiastic, a schoolmaster, and an untiring compiler of lives, sayings, similes, proverbs, and moral commonplaces, to one set of which he gave the title of *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy*. Of philosophy it never comes within sight ; yet it was further expanded by a kindred spirit, and had a long and possibly useful life as a handbook for serious youth and age.

This kind of literature, in fact, with that of devotion, met a need more widely felt in the sixteenth century than any craving for poetry in the modern sense. The *Mirroure*, which was first published in 1559, reprinted in 1563, 1571, and 1574, and extensively eked out in 1587 by John Higgins, clergyman,

schoolmaster, and lexicographer, was probably the most widely read mass of serious secular verse in Elizabeth's reign, and is more broadly characteristic of the taste of the time than any poetry of a higher kind. Apart from Sidney and Jonson, most men, Spenser included, were agreed that the main end of poetry was moral edification; and here the moral end was as squarely faced as in any catechism. No reader of the *Mirroure* could be accused, as were the readers of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Morte d'Arthur* by old Roger Ascham, of battenning upon impropriety. In those funereal folios vice is never presented save for reprobation and condign punishment: the poetry is of the kind that Puritans could read without a qualm of conscience. As for the implied aim of regularizing life and public polity, that was as far promoted as good ends ever are by bad homilies. In that comparatively peaceful age, men had come to read of past human shipwrecks with a sense of edification in the sheer perusal; and the prevailing appetite, which partly determined the poetic course of Spenser, continued to be ministered to by better poets, such as Daniel and Drayton, after Elizabeth had passed away.

The poetry of pleasure, moral and other, to some extent grew up alongside the literature of rhymed information and instruction. Sackville, perhaps with some collaboration from Thomas Norton (who helped Sternhold

and Hopkins with their metrical version of the Psalms), produced *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex* (1561), the first regular English tragedy, a work as resolutely edificatory as the *Mirroure*. But the drama was destined to take care of itself, to the happier end of entertaining men; and the Elizabethans all the while somehow came by "Songs and Sonnets" of varying merit. *Tottel's Miscellany* includes some pieces that can still sing for us, like ancient harpsichords not wholly mouldered or unstrung. The device of breaking up "twelves" and "fourteeners" into quatrains of alternately rhyming lines, for instance, results in a quaintly charming pastoral ballad, *Harpelus' Complaint*: a good lover's song, *Give place you ladies, and begone*; and the odd old canticle of Lord Vaux, *The Aged Lover renounceth Love*, of which broken fragments reappear in the mouth of the gravedigger in *Hamlet*.

There must have been a large unpublished output of such verse in the early Elizabethan years. In 1575 and 1576, one writer, George Gascoigne, put forth the accumulations of a motley life of forty years, to the extent of over a thousand quarto pages of verse and prose. Without attaining to greatness or special charm in any species, he typifies much of the culture-life of upper-class England in his day. Educated at Cambridge, he entered Gray's Inn, and committed follies

enough to cause him, by one account, to be disinherited by his father, Sir John Gascoigne. Yet he sat in Parliament in 1557-8 and 1558-9. After forfeiting or wasting his patrimony, he married a wealthy widow, mother of the minor poet Nicholas Breton, and stood for Midhurst in 1572, only to be rejected, on the strength of documents laid before the Privy Council, as a notoriously bad character, a skulking debtor, a ruffian, and an atheist. Whatever he may have been, he was not the last ; for his prose work includes a series of fervidly devotional treatises, largely borrowed, but all strictly orthodox. He called himself a soldier, and did serve in the Low Countries, where, as at home, he got into jail. His literary character is as hard to whitewash as his social ; for his collective works include a licentious tale, on Italian lines, which is strongly suspected of being a base betrayal of one of his own intrigues. But his versatility remains remarkable. With equal facility he turns out sonnets, rhymed moral and penitential discourses, translations of comedy and tragedy from the Italian, didactic "morality" drama and immorality romance of his own, and the string of devotional treatises aforesaid, all marked by the same torrential flow of composition, all coherent, all grammatical, all the verse correctly scanned, all finally negligible. As a poet he runs chiefly to the old "twelves" and "fourteener" lines, leav-



ing the latter such even when, like others, he divides it in quatrains rhyming only in the second and fourth lines ; but he tried blank verse in his satire, *The Steel Glass*, and in his collaborative tragedy, *Jocasta*, professedly translated from Euripides, but really from a free Italian version, founded on the Latin. In neither does he handle the new form with any technical mastery, the line being nearly always a clause in itself. His facility of production is illustrated by the account given of five poems in his *Flowers* :

And thus an end of these five themes admounting to the number of 258 verses, devised riding by the way, writing none of them until he came at the end of his journey, the which was no longer than one day in riding, one day in tarrying with his friend, and the third in returning to Gray's Inn ; and therefore called Gascoigne's Memories.

Not thus is the higher poetry producible. Gascoigne was simply an uncommonly clever dilettante, as may be finally gathered from his *Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English*, written, with his invariable facility, at the request of an Italian friend. Therein he tells how any man may make verses of any sort, especially the alternate twelve-and-fourteen, happily labelled by him "poulter's measure, which giveth twelve for one dozen and fourteen for another." We gather from his remarks on Chaucer's verse that he knew nothing of its

rule of the sounded final "e," since he claims that, "being read with understanding, the longest verse and that which hath most syllables in it, will fall (to the ear) correspondent unto one which hath fewest syllables in it." That is, he read Chaucer non-metrically, in a loose accentual rhythm, as a friendly poet might; though his own verse all belongs to the modern and regular order, counting by syllables.

On the whole, Gascoigne is a thoroughly Elizabethan figure, alike in his character and his work, his licence and his piety, his "Italianate" culture, and his unflagging interest in literary experiment. He knew nothing very well (unless, perhaps, Italian) and did nothing very well; his moralizing and his immoralism were doubtless equally spontaneous; yet he helped forward both drama and poetry, whatever he did for religion; and it was in keeping with the standards of the time that after his early death in 1577 he should be credited by his literary friend, George Whetstone, with a "well-employed life and godly end." In any case, he challenges our attention in that he was nearer the Elizabethan average than better men and better poets.

Much less interest, indeed, attaches to the quite decorous work of such men as Thomas Howell, who in 1581 published a collection of short poems under the title *H. His Devises*,

for his own *Exercise and his Friends' Pleasure*. "Exercise," we feel, is the right word, whatever may have been the response of the friends; for there is barely a stanza in the book that suggests anything in the nature of poetic afflatus. Any one fondly disposed to think there was a virtue in Elizabethan life which made all poets lyrical can be well disillusioned by a perusal of this collection of laboured trifles. By some inexplicable accident he has contrived a stanza or two of pure poetry in a didactic piece otherwise remarkable only for conscientious carpentry. As thus :

I doubt the Dryades  
Amidst the forest chace,  
And thinking on the Seas  
I dread the Mermaid's grace.

Apart from that one flower, the book is a mere *hortus siccus* or collection of clipped yews and boxes, provocative of speculation as to the reaction of taste in costume upon taste in literature.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPENSER

A CLEAR psychological conception of "the poet" will hardly be attained by way of a study of the chief English singer of the sixteenth century. If we were to outline his

career as men do that of one whom they antagonize, we should describe Edmund Spenser as occupying the earlier part of his mature life in seeking his fortune at Court, producing poetry by the way ; and the latter part, spent in Ireland, in the production of a voluminous ethical allegory while he lived a life wholly alien and hostile to that around him, upon which he had been imposed by a Crown gift of confiscated land. His great poem began to appear in the year after the Armada ; and it belongs alike in spirit and in idea to the fabulous age of chivalry. He is no harmonizer of life : as little is he an interpreter of it. But to see this is only to realize once more that a poet is something else than a prophet, an artist other than a philosopher. Spenser, for his age a teacher, is for us first and last a maker of the music of words, a creator of rhythmical and phraseological beauty ; and it is in virtue of that faculty that he has retained through three poetic eras the status of " the poets' poet."

In English literature, he begins the great line of the university poets. A poor man's son, helped by others to his schooling, he was from his earliest London days bookish ; and at the age of sixteen or seventeen (if we can be at all sure about the merely inferred year of his birth) we find him contributing translations from the French to a composite volume, *The Theatre of Worldlings* (1569), published in

an English translation for one Vander Noodt, a Flemish refugee. The compiler professes to have translated from the Dutch and Flemish two "sonnet" series taken from Du Bellay and from Marot's rendering of Petrarch, which are substantially identical with the two versions later published by or for Spenser, in his miscellaneous volume of 1590, the latter as "formerly translated." The mystification is not yet wholly cleared up; but it is obvious that the verse translations are by an English hand; and as Vander Noodt seems to have been his friend, it can hardly be doubted that they are really by the young Spenser, who in the year of their issue entered Cambridge University. He was thus already something of a linguist (unless, indeed, Vander Noodt had given him prose versions to versify); and no less remarkable is the fact that the translation later called *The Visions of Bellay*, which in 1590 has been put in rhyme, appears in the first form in fluid and limpid blank verse—necessarily primitive as regards its "end-stopped" structure, as was most English blank verse before Shakespeare, but fresh, fluent, and really flawless; the "irregular" lines being in fact forerunners of our most modern rhythmical innovations. About his seventeenth year Spenser had written some of the best English blank verse yet produced.

The process of his formation, only slightly

to be traced in biographic record, is to be divined from the beginnings. All his studies he tended to "turn to favour and to prettiness." He spent a number of years in "the north"—somewhere about Pendle Hill, on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire. And if we are to conclude that the rustic diction which fills the *Shepherd's Calendar* and colours the *Faerie Queene* was a dialect there spoken, we are left with the puzzling inference that Lancashire or Yorkshire folk in those days used a dialect that was in large part identical with Lowland Scots, for only in Scots are many of his words latterly current. Courting, studying, mixing with rustic life, or seeking secretarial occupation or Court patronage, conning alternately Chaucer and the classics, and the French and the Italians, planning some poems never written and penning a number now lost, he must have been perpetually experimenting. Under the influence of his friend, Gabriel Harvey, at college and later, he produced strange shapes of pseudo-classic rhythm, norms incapable of survival in English, while he made no further attempt in the sound form of blank verse. But his hold on or love for Chaucer and archaic English saved him from going far in the blind alley of pedantry.

On the other hand his archaism and rusticism, the instinctive resort of so many poets since, and the natural device of sensitive

spirits conscious of the prosaic air of the present, served to win him the favour of readers similarly minded, at some cost of masculine strength. To turn from Spenser, either to the objective verse of Marlowe or Shakespeare or to the later subjective verse of Jonson or Chapman or Donne, is to realize that the more virile natures perforce took another way. They are signally modern by contrast. Spenser, with all his originality, is artistically atavistic, both in form and substance. But that, after all, is for the given artist the way of being himself ; and Spenser's power is in its own kind as rare as any.

His artistic greatness becomes clear as soon as we note his public emergence ten years after his precocious start. At the date of the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), Elizabethan verse had at no point excelled the legacy of Surrey and Wyatt. Neither in satire nor in lyric had Gascoigne transcended their inspiration ; and a contempt for poetry as a form of trifling was still perhaps the ruling sentiment among men of the world. That way of thinking doubtless persisted ; but thenceforth the lovers of verse had justification for their faith. The *Calendar* might be compared with the concert performance of a modern virtuoso in music : it reveals at once the highest reach of executive faculty in the widest range of artistic forms that Englishmen had yet seen in their own lan-

guage. Only a born and trained master of verse could have achieved such vigour with such melody of utterance ; such ease in a dozen styles ; such expert facility in transfigured folk-song along with such evident scholarly accomplishment. Here again Spenser was following the French lead of Marot, two of the eclogues being paraphrases from him ; but the pupil is himself grown a master. Sidney, half true poet, half artistic dilettante, might balk at the archaism and the rusticism ; but for him and for all the cultured youth of England here was no additional dilettante but a new master, to whom hats must be lifted.

The mark of many-sidedness, of variety of art and of interest, is upon all the rest of Spenser's miscellaneous poetry, ranging as it does from the satirical and topical verse of *Mother Hubbard's Tale* and *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* to the andante music of the *Epithalamion* and the high soprano flight of the *Four Hymns*, youthful performances inspired by Plato. Not till the nineteenth century was there to come another poet with such diversity of theme and power.

It may be, indeed, that Spenser pays the penalty of many-sidedness and fecundity in a failure to reach the topmost height of excellence in any one whole poem : that he compares rather with the multiform and motley exuberance of Browning than with the



finished perfection of the master-songs of Milton and Tennyson. Even the *Epithalamion* will not bear the full weight of praise that has been heaped upon it : such a line as

Those trouts and pikes all others do excell

tells of a failure either of inspiration or of judgment ; and there are other items of padding. But all this does not affect the conclusion that Spenser is the first great master in modern English poetry ; that his artistic endowment is of the rarest fulness ; and that he marks and opens an era. Nothing comparable to the *Epithalamion* and the *Prothalamion* for sheer variety of melody and wealth of charm had ever before appeared in English, or was to appear for many a day after. Tried by the standard of previous achievement, Spenser is simply alone : there is no rival. His shorter pieces constitute a new kind of poem and new kinds of beauty ; and his *magnum opus*, which is not thus unique, is none the less above contemporary rivalry. With the appearance of the first three cantos of the *Faerie Queene* there is bestowed upon modern English literature something lost since Chaucer's day, the franchise of the historic kingdom of civilized song, reaching from Homer down the ages. The mere power to produce without limit continuous and canorous verse, as perfectly ordered in its own fashion as that of any other language, stood

for something more than the moral content of the poem. That, indeed, tells clearly enough of mental immaturity, alike in its obtrusiveness and in its inadequacy. But, save for the sombre stanza-poetry of Sackville, English metric art had not latterly revealed any capacity to compete with such European masters as Ariosto and Tasso. It was in the apprentice stage, occupied with minor tasks such as Spenser himself had transcended once for all in his *Calendar*. Tutored by the Italian epic-makers, and in especial by Ariosto—without whose example, and that of Tasso, his great poem would never have been written—he now essays their larger art, passing from folk-song, as it were, to symphony. A living poet has vividly described the magical advance of Shakespeare on his greatest predecessor as a substitution for “gong and cymbals’ din” of

The continuity, the long slow slope  
And vast curve of the gradual violin.

With perhaps no more qualification than is strictly called for in the case put, the same may be said of Spenser’s advance upon his predecessors in rhymed verse. His mere stanza is admittedly a new felicity, the long closing line having an incalculable melodic value; and his gift of lovely phrase at once electrified his fellow-craftsmen, as it has delighted song-lovers ever since.

It is too true that all this new wealth of beauty is in part countervailed by artistic blemishes of the most grievous kind. The art of Spenser is no less of a paradox than his character, his life. When, seeking to know the man, we scan closely his prose *View of the Present State of Ireland*, we find ourselves looking through eyes clear and hard as glass, a personality as narrow and ungenial as that of any Spanish *conquistador* of the age. The "cold" Bacon, in this regard, shows by far the wider vision, the warmer touch of what we should call either poetic or statesmanlike sympathy. Spenser was as far from the humanism of Whitman or even of Tennyson as the Lord Grey of his day was from that of the Sir George Grey of ours. We feel that, with all his antiquarian outlook, his relation to the Irish folk around him was rather that of a later American frontiersman to a Comanche, or of a Massachusetts Puritan to a Pequod. And in his work he is just as duplex. In the *Faerie Queene*, the master of the lovely line and the exquisite phrase outgoes the popular dramatists in his resort to images of nastiness; and with all his moralizing his imagination is often gratuitously gross. It has been said of him, with strict truth, that for purposes of reading aloud in a mixed company, Spenser's chief poem would require far more excision than would that of Ariosto. To saint him for

"purity" because of his Puritan tone and tactic is either to garble or to overlook much of his matter. The mere nauseousness of much of his imagery must set a sensitive modern reader chronically thinking of disinfected.

Once for all, we must realize that we are dealing with a poet, and a poet of the English Renaissance at that; not with a thinker. He is an artist in words in an age of foul smells and much foul talk. Spenser's poetry, at least in the bulk of the *Faerie Queene*, is in no sense "philosophical." His *Four Hymns*, wherein he makes his chief effort of a philosophic kind, are but youthful paraphrases of Plato. Philosophy was in fact not yet become an English study; and Spenser had no original power of that kind. In his great poem, for sheer lack of abstract thinking power, he multiplies crudities of allegory which alternately suggest charades and burlesque—as when, in the second book, Guyon wrestles with Furor and has to tie up Occasion in order to succeed. It is no use to say with Hazlitt that the allegory will not bite us. It does, persistently, as if the poet felt that we had thus to be kept awake. Having exhausted one allegorical thesis he turns his figures to some other thesis, making Duessa now Queen Mary, now the Church of Rome.

All the while he shows no real allegorical gift. The whole theorem of the Blatant

Beast as = popular calumny is frigid mechanism. Strangely enough, the mystic poet can hardly ever suggest moral evil save by the physically disgusting, outgoing as he does the horrors of Dante's hell by his laboured pictures of the merely beastly. Here he followed the lead of Ariosto, but with far more resort to crudely materialistic devices. It is an error of minimization to speak of "*the Blatant Beast*" in the *Faerie Queene*. There are half a dozen beasts in the story, all of the same brand.

All this was part of the penalty of adherence to the medieval device of allegory and the Italian machinery of knights-errant, dragons, enchanters, and enchantresses. As the knights had to be brave, the witches had to be fundamentally vile, and the dragons loathsome. In Spenser's case the syncretic result is a long poem without unity, an eked-out string of similar episodes without vital connexion, a procession of personages distinguishable only as good and bad, fair and foul, brave and craven. His imitations of the female warriors of Ariosto and Tasso are at least as unconvincing as the originals; and his moral lessons are no more impressive than theirs. It was the æsthetic fallacy of that age to hold by the didactic view of all art; and to think that all shortcomings in workmanship were salved by an obtrusive moral commentary. Harington, translating

and commenting Ariosto (1591), and Fairfax, translating and introducing Tasso (1600), clang moral symbols and rattle mechanisms of allegory that might conceivably serve to scare off all save celibate pedagogues. All round, the pseudo-historical personages are much less recognizably human than the Zeus and Hera of Homer, or the Satan of Milton: the portrayal of discernible characters was to come in only with the new English drama. Spenser was too fanatically malicious to make of Mary Queen of Scots anything but a loathly sorceress; and his ideal knights may as well be identified with any one Elizabethan as with any other, since they portray none. It is a decisive testimony to his power in other regards that his pageant of unrealities could go on attracting readers alongside of the living "pell-mell of Shakespeare's men and women."

And still we return to Spenser as to the gracious colour-work of Old Masters whose picture-themes have ceased to concern us. His art, it is true, incurs risks from which theirs is exempt. The specific sin of the art of words is verbiage; and Spenser's stanza sins in that kind with a heedlessness hard to forgive. The great poem often suggests a dredging machine which with equal facility pours forth gold, diamonds, and mud, as being bound to keep going, whatever be the material forthcoming. No other great poet

has produced so many lines of doggerel, so much unashamed line-padding. All that must just be accepted as a by-product of the gold and the gems. It cannot be that he did not realize the varying quality of his output. Four times over, in different works, he new-minted the lines :

Upon her eyelids many graces sate  
Under the shadow of her even brows.

When he wrote :

And ever and anon the rosy red  
Flashed through her face.  
(*F. Q.* III, ii, 5),

he was but hitting the best of several phrases, of which one runs :

And ever and anon with rosy red  
The bashful blood her snowy cheeks did dye  
(II, ix, 41).

He loved thus to jewel his long-drawn tapestry with pearls great and small. We seem to see him looking up at his audience for their approving glance, joying in his melody. And where he did not repeat, others did for him. Instantly after the issue of the first three cantos, Marlowe in the printed *Tamburlaine* chants over again the melody of the lines :

Like to an almond-tree ymounted high  
On top of green Selinis all alone,

With blossoms brave bedeckèd daintily ;  
Whose tender locks do tremble every one  
At every little breath that under heaven is blown  
(*F. Q.* I, vii, 32).

Peele in *David and Bethsabe* repeats with hardly a change the dancing carol :

At last, the golden Oriental gate  
Of greatest heaven 'gan to open fair,  
And Phœbus, fresh as bridegroom to his mate,  
Came dancing forth, shaking his dewy hair,  
And hurled his glistening beams through gloomy air.  
(*F. Q.* I, v, 2).

And Greene or Peele in *Lochrine*, and Greene or Marlowe in *Selimus*—two early plays of the Marlowe school—echo a number of lines, passages, and phrases. The inspirer of all this chorus knew as well as any one when he had written beautifully : he must have been nearly as well aware when he produced relative commonplace and padding. We can but infer that for Spenser the didactic view of poetry served as an anæsthetic to the artistic sensè. To regard the main aim of a poem as moral instruction was to conceive of beauty of workmanship as an embellishment rather than an essential. In the *View of the Present State of Ireland*, Spenser's own representative in the dialogue speaks of having had some of the native poems translated for him, and pronounces that "surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention ; but skilled not of the goodly ornaments of poetry ; yet were



they sprinkled with some pretty flowers of their own natural device." Evidently he would not have assented to Arnold's view of poetry as something to be evolved in the sheer exposition of a great theme or action: it was for him rather a jewelling of the text. Such a conception of his art permitted of much prosaic statement and diffuse diction to which "ornament" was to be a relief. What can always be counted on in Spenser is fluency and perfect scansion: dignity of purport and diction is in comparison precarious. But in one respect Spenser is almost unfailingly poetical. His prevailing bias is to the elegiac: "sad" is his favourite adjective; and at well-nigh every opportunity he raises reverie to a grave music. His poetry thus resembles in its effects those of the pre-Wagnerian forms of opera in which much of the progress of the action was made in largely uninspired recitative, which rose from time to time into tuneful arias. For instance, in the first canto of the fourth book, resuming the interrupted task, we set out in rather unpromising fashion with the customary captive maiden and fighting virgin and "jolly knight"; and in due course the rescued maid and the rescuer meet two knights accompanied by the false Duessa and Até, in whom,

Under mask of beauty and good grace,  
Vile treason and foul falsehood hidden were.

Then comes the description of the home of Até, "mother of debate," and out of the pedestrian pace of the narrative the aria rises, pure and fine :

And all within, the riven walls were hung  
With ragged monuments of times forepast,  
All which the sad effects of discord sung :  
There were rent robes and broken sceptres placed,  
Altars defiled, and holy things defaced ;  
Disshivered spears, and shields ytorn in twain ;  
Great cities ransackt, and strong castles rased ;  
Nations captivèd, and huge armies slain :  
Of all which ruins there some relics did remain.

There was the sign of antique Babylon ;  
Of fatal Thebes ; of Rome that reignèd long ;  
Of sacred Salem ; and sad Ilion,  
For memory of which on high there hong  
The Golden Apple, cause of all their wrong,  
For which the three fair Goddesses did strive :  
There also was the name of Nimrod strong,  
Of Alexander, and his princes five  
Which shar'd to them the spoils that he had got  
alive.

Lingeringly the strain dwells on "old, unhappy far-off things," recalling the themes of the poet's earlier translations from Bellay, and musically delaying the inevitable moral lesson and the unpleasant picture ; till through these we revert to the ding-dong of the combating knights, banging spear on shield, and the wonted machinery of hags and enchantresses.

It is for these springing fountains of song

in the wilderness of allegory that we roam with Spenser's wandering knights and squires and maidens through "antres vast and deserts idle," with their ever-renewed mirage of symbolism. At the close, after an eager return to his old pastoral plane, he rises to a dim height of cosmic reverie, in which the whole dream-world is dissolved,

And Nature's self did vanish, whither no man wist.

The plan is uncompleted : the eighth canto is but begun ; and there were to have been twenty-four. But the poem ends there as well as it ever could. And the closing strain, one thinks, cannot but have been in Shakespeare's thought when he penned the mightier lines on the ultimate transmutation of "the great globe itself," that should leave "not a wrack behind"—anticipating in poetic ecstasy, with his fellow-immortal, the remotest vision of the prophetic science of a later day.

Thus, starting as he did from the didactic standpoint of his age, acclaiming the aim and matter of the moralizing historical poets, he rose above their level no less in his poetic reverie than in his command of beauty ; but he remained for his age above all things a moral poet. For Milton he was "our sage and serious poet," "a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas"—as well as a master in phrase and melody ; for Drayton he was "grave moral Spenser." Neither these nor

any of his contemporaries have commented on the curious fact that the great singer has not given us one song, in the ordinary sense of the term. "The woods were full of them," so to speak; but he has no woodnote wild, such as Milton heard in Shakespeare, no song for sheer singing. Though the *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion* are in a sense nobly lyrical, they are yet reflective, constructive, woven harmonies of violins and bassoons, never sounding the lyrical cry. There is no "Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings," no "Drink to me only with thine eyes," in all Spenser. The moral poet needs a text: only in virtue of that does he frame his sonnets, styled by him "Amoretti."

In that vein, he is among the best of the sonneteers, though he does not surpass the finest of Sidney and Drayton, to say nothing of Shakespeare, who, somewhat surprisingly, excels him alike in fluidity and in distinction (though these are qualities of his) no less than in the undertones which give depth and strength. Spenser's sonnets are pretty much in one key, that of rapture, varied only by the customary indictment of the cruel fair or sigh for the absent one; and out of the eighty-eight it would be hard to cull confidently a golden masterpiece; though the 68th, "Most glorious Lord of Life," is well sustained, and the 34th and 70th are tuneful in the way of the *Faerie Queene*. What is most surprising

in all his work, however, is that the master of elegy should in his *Astrophel*, the dirge for the dead and adored Sidney, succeed no better than any other performer. It would seem that the personal and intimate grief shook and stunned the brooding singer, disabling him for his characteristic harmonies, and compelling him to have recourse to conventional fantasy and rhetoric. In his dirge in *The Ruins of Time* for the less lovable Leicester, Sidney's uncle, he sounds a far more memorable note :

I saw him die, I saw him die as one  
Of the mean people . . .

^ The romantic poet, as was dramatically fitting, himself met tragic misfortune, and died in a climax of distress which, though the misery of the closing scene was doubtless exaggerated, moved deeply the culture-class of an age that had already pedestalled him. His professed purpose of moralizing it had perforce come to naught. If his great poem had any social influence, it must have been rather hardening than otherwise : he did but teach his countrymen to hate their neighbours, as they were more than ready to do. He had none of the kindly ironic humour of Ariosto : sardonic satire is his only approximation to laughter ; and he learned nothing even of Christian cosmopolitanism from Tasso. In so far as men are conceivably

to be made better by moral poetry, the lesson was given in that age, if at all, by the artists whose work was "drenched in flesh and blood," and who could thus in some measure teach their fellows to know themselves. Spenser, far more highly acclaimed in his day than these, had not their power to enlarge men's outlook on life. But he gave his countrymen of his best, and the gift has ever since been cherished. He made for them a manifold music ; and to few is it given to render a more excellent service. ✓

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRE-SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

BETWEEN the "interlude" of the age of Henry VIII and the drama of the closing decades of the reign of Elizabeth there is a sunderance in species which at a glance tells of new departures. The interlude or "morality" play is essentially an allegory, and typically religious. Bishop Bale, who reveals some real dramatic faculty through his didactic purpose, introduces in his *King Johan* (1548 ?) a historical element which may be said to prelude the chronicle play ; but even there he works with allegorical as well as historical figures, and makes drama out of

abstractions of moral and political and ecclesiastical tendencies and interests. Interludes of the old species continued to be produced as late as 1580, when Stephen Gosson's *Play of Plays*, otherwise *Delight*, included the characters of Life, Delight, Zeal, Glut, Recreation, and Tediousness; and the device of abstraction was employed much later still, as in Jonson's Court masques. But already in 1580, as Gosson testifies, a multitude of story-plays, drawn from Italian and Spanish tales, of which Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* is the great storehouse, had been performed in the London theatres. These early dramas seem to have been written partly in the old irregular verse, partly in prose.

Drama of the "Elizabethan" species begins to emerge before rhyme begins to be superseded by blank verse. The *Damon and Pythias* of Richard Edwards (1563) and the first *Apius and Virginia* (1567), a more notable work for its time than the later play of Webster on the same theme, have reached the plane of character-drama proper; as have the comedy of *Ralph Roister-Doister*, by Nicholas Udall (1562), and John Still's vigorous farce of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (circa 1566); though in the latter the law of farce subordinates character to comic action. These performances of Edwards, Udall, and Still are all in the rough, irregular verse of the interludes, a rude metre which represents the

decay of the regular Chaucerian verse, with its French-sounded final *e*'s, into an English line at first capable of no regular scansion and only gradually to be raised to strict metre. *Apius and Virginia* represents a capable attempt to regularize the old verse in keeping with recent progress in non-dramatic poetry; and at the same time to give human interest to the play of personality alongside of the old abstractions of Conscience, Justice, Comfort, Doctrina, Haphazard, and Vice, and so on. *Damon and Pythias*, though the work of the "Master of the Children of the Chapel" who acted it, is much ruder in point of its versification, which is largely rough doggerel; but it is in some important respects nearer to drama proper, having dispensed with allegory and abstraction. The prologue explains that the author, by a "sudden change," has turned from a "comical" vein of doubtful taste: "and yet," he goes on—

And yet (worshipful audience) thus much I dare  
avouch:

In comedies the greatest skill is this, rightly to touch  
All things to the quick; and eke to frame each person  
so

That by his common talk you may his nature rightly  
know.

A roister ought not preach: that were too strange to  
hear,

and so on. Thus we are still in the drama of



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types, though not in that of abstractions ; and the author, obeying the command of Horace—

In all such kind of exercise decorum to observe—

presents “ matter mix’d with mirth and care,”  
to which

A just name to apply

As seems most fit we have it termed a tragical comedy.

His ideal is thus properly dramatic ; though in the primitive manner he makes his personages address the audience as freely as they do each other. We are at a stage of transition between dramatic moral teaching and the reproduction of life.

The starting-point of the typical drama of the Shakespearean age is obviously the academic *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex*, of Sackville (1561), written in the new regular blank verse of Surrey, and constructed on the model of the late Latin tragedies of Seneca. The interlude is now definitely transcended. Here we have presentments of personality, of character, of historic action. The persons, indeed, are rather abstractions of types of action than studies of human beings, although the action is quasi-historical ; but none the less the historical play and the character-play are here in germ ; and we find clear traces of the influence of this early model in the serious work of the group of poet-play-

wrights of the next generation who immediately preceded Shakespeare. And yet the most essential principle of the Senecan tragedy, here fully present, was entirely set aside later. Senecan tragedy follows and impoverishes the Greek in its reduction of action to narrative. On that state the tragic events are not enacted; they are described and deplored; and the master-characteristic of the later Elizabethan drama—continuous vehement and tempestuous action—is excluded by the law of unity of place and the descriptive function of the chorus. In the *Jocasta* of George Gascoigne and his collaborators (1566), a free adaptation of an Italian adaptation of the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides, another notable attempt is made to establish classic tragedy in English; but that play, like *Gorboduc*, never got beyond the subsidized stage of the universities, the Inns of Court, and the Court. The populace would have none of them. So with Robert Wilmot's tragedy of *Tancred and Gismunda*, played before the Queen at the Inner Temple in 1568, and re-written in blank verse of the early style of Surrey and Sackville in 1591. The piece, "tending only to the exaltation of virtue and suppression of vice," is Senecan through and through; as is Thomas Hughes's *Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587), to which several amateurs contributed speeches and choruses, and in which Bacon helped with the "dumb shows."

Written in scholarly blank verse, but without dramatic feeling, such plays had no stage life. And here emerges the process of economic causation which resulted in the Elizabethan drama, commonly so called.

The vital divergence which took place in that age between the drama of England and that of France is commonly explained as an expression of the divergent minds or temperaments of the two nations. Englishmen are supposed to have demanded one kind of art; and Frenchmen another. But there is no good ground for such a theory of human nature as is involved in saying that the composite population of England could take satisfaction only in a dramatic form which was repugnant to the equally composite population of France. The fact is that the French populace never had the chance that was offered to the English of determining the line of evolution of the literary drama. Of natural verve there is abundance in the multitudinous old French farce of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of which *Maître Pathelin* is the best example. It stands for an evolution far in advance of anything reached in England till the middle of the sixteenth century, though there too there was a good deal of simple farce in the Miracle Plays annually produced by the trade guilds. It was, in fact, the very freedom of action in the French popular drama, transgressing all bounds of

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decency, that made possible the reaction to strict classicism in tragedy in the period in which Italian influence brought the Senecan tragedy into French favour. The early tragedies of the school of Jodelle (1552 onwards) were played in colleges, for scholastic audiences, who wanted something totally removed alike from farce and the popular "mystery" plays, which were hardly less indecent. About the same period there appeared "Moralities" of a historical character, involving real action; but political drama was a dangerous course in monarchic France, and the *spécies* could not flourish.

It was in the same generation that French adaptation of Italian comedy set up the plane of transition from the old farce to the later comedy of Molière, by way of the interlude of Spanish influence at the close of the sixteenth century. At this stage the classic convention was shaken to the extent of a rejection by more than one playwright of the rule of the unities of time and place. The most productive of these dramatists, Alexandre Hardy, who then came to the front, and who is reckoned to have written in all some six hundred plays, was no poet; and even if he were, could not have maintained even a fair level of workmanship in such a vast mass of composition. But while leaning in his tragedies to the classic tradition, he innovated by suppressing the chorus, by multiplying scenes and

actions, and by curtailing the monologue. His enormous production, further, seems to have been due to the extreme smallness of his pay, which was necessarily affected by the heavy taxes levied on the travelling companies by the municipalities in name of poor-rate ; and by the heavy " free list " in Paris. His remuneration in his best days ran from two to five crowns ! Most of his plays must have been " pieces of occasion " ; yet he has left over thirty tragedies, mostly on classical subjects. Meanwhile, the more literary tragedies of the schools of Jodelle and Garnier were the monopolies of colleges, and constituted the resort of all the respectable people who were repelled by the gross indecencies of the still prevailing farces. Many of the plays, too, were in long sequences or series, running for six or eight days—a kind of entertainment never meant for the populace, who continued to patronize the farces all the more when the authorities sought to keep them within bounds by administrative measures.

Finally, the Court, represented by the masterful Richelieu, took under its patronage the classic tragedy, attracting to that, by rewards, poets of much greater culture than Hardy ; and a tragic drama which, if left free to grow in its own way, might have transcended Hardy on native lines, was tied down to the ill-comprehended law of the unities. Rotrou refused to obey, but the combined

influence of Richelieu and the Academy which he founded and ruled was decisive for Corneille; and the form and spirit of French tragedy by him established were fixed for two hundred years. Classic forms are the outcome of previous conditions; but, once fixed, they command allegiance.

The rapid development of a powerful native drama in Elizabethan England can now be seen to be due to the different social and economic conditions. To begin with, the universal practice of running Miracle Plays or Mysteries at Eastertide, Whitsuntide, and other religious festival-times, set up at once a training-ground for actors and a popular proclivity to things dramatic. On this basis proceeded the development of both acting and play-making. As early as the reign of Henry VIII, it was the fashion for noblemen to have companies of players in their occasional service; and this practice continued throughout the century. The companies of players, to begin with, had thus a certain economic basis in the patronage of the nobles who primarily retained them; and when they played in London they were not "protected" as were those of Paris, where one or two companies held a monopoly under which they practically defied the control of the authorities, who were always complaining of their licence. In 1583 the Queen set up a company of her own; but that had no special immunities.

The London theatre about this period seems to have been coarse enough ; but freedom, as always, was in the end favourable to decency, a certain standard being set up in the effort to appeal to all classes. We get a fair notion of the kind of comedy in vogue from *Fedele and Fortunio: the two Italian Gentlemen*, translated by Thomas Hackett from the Italian of Luigi Pasqualigo, and printed in 1584. Here the staple verse is the old "fourteener," still written in large part with the most heedless irregularity, and generally running to doggerel, but variegated with perfectly regular dialogue in stanzas, carefully executed. The plot is thoroughly Italian, a ceaseless bustle of intrigue and deception, disguises, tricks, rival lovers, maid and mistress and go-between, all devoid of character interest, save as regards the established types of the Pedant and the bombastic soldier. The latter receives the English name of Captain Crackstone ; but the others are all Italians, as was to be the rule on the English stage for two generations. It was in fact, despite the lead of Edwards, mainly by Italian comedy that the lift was given to the English theatre out of the methods of the morality play, with its abstract personages ; and at the outset the new drama is nearer farce than comedy, though there are many Latin quotations, and the Pedant reads out an Italian letter, which he translates. The

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stage directions show that already there was regular music between the acts : " The first Act being ended, the Consort of Musique soundeth a pleasant Galliard " ; " The third Act being ended, the Consort sounds a solemn Dump " ; " The fourth Act being ended, the Consort soundeth a pleasant Allemaigne " ; and so on. Evidently the theatre sought to entertain the educated as well as other classes.

Then, after the semi-popular plays of the scholarly Lilly, ranging from rustic comedy to quasi-mythological pieces fitted for the Court, came the run of historical or " chronicle " plays which made the ground for Shakespeare. The framing and recasting of these plays, which seem first to have been scribbled by half-educated actors, became a means of hand-to-mouth livelihood for Bohemian university men, who were called upon to write for a general audience that did not want Senecan tragedy. It was not that English scholars were averse to the Senecan model. In point of fact, as we have seen, that model had been dutifully welcomed by scholarly and semi-scholarly poets ; it had the respectable suffrages to such an extent that it influenced even the popular stage ; and as late as the last decade of Elizabeth's reign translations from the French tragedies of Garnier were published by Thomas Kyd, a popular playwright on native lines, and by the poet Samuel Daniel, under the influence of the



classic bias fostered by Sidney, and after his death by his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. A distinct Senecan influence indeed marks the work of Kyd, Greene, and Peele. But the living drama rose out of the "effective demand" of the populace for a kind of play suited to its taste and capacity; and in the liberty to meet that demand lay the secret of the English evolution. The actors must have audiences; and the playwrights had to cater for their requirements, to the extent even of mixing farce with history and tragedy. Many plays, in rhyme and in prose, had been produced under those conditions by men of small culture: it was the need to draw educated as well as uneducated spectators, to please alternately the Court and the commons, that led to the enlistment of educated men, capable of producing dignified and sonorous poetry. From first to last, the economic factor counts.

In the lives of Kyd, Peele, Greene, and Marlowe we see how the economic demand operated. The companies which played in the early London theatres, notably the Queen's, the Chamberlain's, and the Admiral's, sought from the playwrights new plays suited to the popular stage; and between the theatrical demand for interesting action and the literary preparation of the scholar-playwrights there was evolved the blank-verse drama of vigorous changing action, freed from the cramping

unities of time and place, and marked by a blending or alternation of serious and comic scenes. The academic training meant a resort to verse ; and after the notable success of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, the value of the freedom of blank verse was felt to be proved. Most of the plays produced before 1585 have disappeared ; but we know from the censures of Sidney in his *Defence of Poetry*, and from those of Whetstone in the preface to his *Promos and Cassandra* (the basis of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*), that a reckless disregard of the unities was a common feature. Audiences were to be won by the human interest in a personage who appeared to them first as a child, then grew up and won fame and fortune by adventures in foreign lands. The old machinery of princesses, enchanters and dragons was freely employed, simply because it was popular ; and scenes of clowning were common simply because the audiences would have them, as they and their fathers before them had been wont to do in the old Miracle Plays and Mysteries. Above all, actors wanted speeches which they could deliver with some effect of reality : and the two arts, the mimetic and the poetic, inevitably reacted on each other.

One scholarly dramatist intervened who did not take what was to be the beaten path. John Lilly or Lyly, after making his fashion-

able success in didactic and "stylistic" prose fiction with his two *Euphues* books in 1579 and 1580, abandoned for ever that style of writing, and became a maker of "Court" comedies. In this walk too he met with success, though, writing as he did for the companies of child-actors of St. Paul's School, of which he was vice-master, he could not hope to secure great theatrical effects, and did not seek to do so. In only one play, *The Woman in the Moon*, did he essay blank-verse; and in only one other, *Mother Bombie*, did he deal with English life; all the rest being on mythological themes, though with a variety of contemporary applications. The children of Chapel Royal played several of his plays. *Endymion* is an elaborate glorification of the Queen, and other Court personages are supposed to be indicated in that and others of his pieces; but he never won favour enough to secure the preferment for which he longed: and if the Pandora of the *Woman in the Moon* were taken, as it apparently must have been, for Elizabeth, his ill-fortune is not hard to understand. If it was his revenge for non-fulfilment of Court promises, it was a fatal one. For the second time—offence having been previously given by the veiled politics of Midas—the children of Paul's were inhibited from playing; and Lilly withdrew to his "cell" of retirement, and to the poverty which fell upon most of

the playwrights of the age. "Our pleasant Willy, ah, is dead of late," wrote Spenser in his *Tears of the Muses* (1590)—almost certainly referring to our dramatist. His work was done. It undoubtedly affected other men's method in comedy, including Shakespeare's: the Sir Tophas of *Endymion* gave hints for Sir Toby Belch and Falstaff; and the Euphuistic dialogue of this and others of his seven pieces is clearly reflected in the Shakespearean and other comedy which followed. But the whole set remain, like *Euphues*, things of their period, products of clever workmanship that always falls short of genius, though always original in their way. The tragedy which was the highest reach of his generation Lilly never essayed.

That grew out of older and more deeply rooted forms. Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, an early "classic," first played perhaps about 1585, tells already of a considerable evolution. It borrows from Senecan tragedy the idea of a series of revenges and retributions, and the machinery of an avenging ghost. But the plot, the marshalling of a bustling and stirring series of events, keeping the spectator's interest on tension, is the outcome of the English conditions. In one scene two lovers exchange amorous talk, and the man is seized and hanged before the woman's eyes—a thing impossible on the classic stage of France. The bereaved father

and mother pass through long-drawn griefs and frenzies which demand from the actors all that their mimetic art could do; and the ultimate revenge on all the wrongers is accomplished by a complex machinery of stratagem which would hold a simple-minded audience breathless. An exciting series of events is the first requisite: poetic declamation is the spontaneous contribution of the dramatist, reared on Seneca and on Senecan styles.

From such beginnings the blank-verse drama climbed within a dozen years to the music and the magic of *The Merchant of Venice*; and in a few years more to the storm-swept heights of *Othello* and *Lear*. Nothing is more remarkable in that age of leaping growth than the rapid development of nearly all of the more active practitioners. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* has little in the nature of individual characterization: the bereaved father Hieronimo is rather a rhetorical type than a person; and the heroine, Bellimperia, is hardly more than a plot-personage; though the villains, who in some scenes are perhaps supplied by another hand, are vigorously drawn. But if, as is now substantially certain, Kyd wrote *Arden of Feversham* (1592), he had in a few years acquired the power of putting in lifelike action real men and women, villains drawn from actual observation, tragedy that grows out of every-

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day life, actual contemporary character, passion, and crime. So simply strong is that work as a whole that many critics, disregarding the profound differences of verse technique and verbal art, have ascribed the play to Shakespeare, as being alone capable of such power of portraiture. And, indeed, the production of such a piece by Kyd might have seemed impossible if we had not the indisputable cases of Marlowe and Greene, whose swift rise from crude to relatively ripe art is in its way as signal as the progression of Shakespeare from *Venus and Adonis* to *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The advent of Marlowe in the drama is somewhat like the portent of his *Tamburlaine* in the field of history. At one stroke a new and exorbitant energy makes a clean sweep of existing conventions, and barbaric force drives its path athwart the overthrown pretensions of all who had held the ground. As one who sounds a trumpet, he tells his audience that he calls them away from "jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits" and leads them to "the stately tent of war." It is less a play than a pageant of strife, slaughter, and victory, in which the striding conqueror, "in high astounding terms," proclaims the progress of his ruthless triumph over the kingdoms of the world. Such a picture of savage megalomania had never before been staged; such thunderous force

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of rhythmic phrase had never yet been found possible in any modern language. And it is the spontaneous primary utterance of the poet's own mastering dream of greatness. In a famous passage of *Tamburlaine* he sings the rapture of the quest of the impossible:

If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
Their minds and muses on admired themes ;  
If all the heavenly quintessence they 'stil  
From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit ;  
If these had made one poem's period  
And all combin'd in beauty's worthiness,  
Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,  
Which into words no virtue could digest:

How, we are moved to ask—how came such a golden strain to soar from the brazen orchestra that thunders forth the fierce tale of the Scythian war-lord ? The answer is that the poetry and the dramaturgy express but phases of the same psychosis. It was even such a passion for the utmost things that carried Marlowe in a few crowded years from the clangours of *Tamburlaine* to the far more complex and intellectual presentment of exorbitant ambitions in the *Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus*. Barabas compasses boundless wealth—pictured with all Marlowe's burning splendour of verbal colour—and seeks

to wreak without limit his lawless and malignant will: Faustus, finding no rest in the heaping-up of all science, "still climbing after knowledge infinite," as Tamburlaine before, will compass at any cost the utmost scope of human desire, and naught less than Helen's self shall content him.

In the no less original historical play of *Edward II*, partly disfigured as it is, like *Faustus*, by the additions and perversions of alien hands, we find portrayed the same intense stresses of will, with the same dramatic counterplay of fate, destroying the wild egotist whom the gods had made mad. For Marlowe was no mere singer of the Superman, no mere mouthpiece of self-asserting passion. His dramas are wholes, planned for their climax and catastrophe: that of the ruthless, all-grasping Tamburlaine, the "fiery thirster after sovereignty," laid low by mere inevitable death; that of the demoniacal Jew shattered at length by the moral play of normal mundane forces; that of the insatiable Faustus paying his supernatural penalty; that of the vicious and ungovernable king brought to humiliation and death by his own frowardness. Pitiful as was his end, slain in a low tavern brawl, the framer of these dramas was something more than a flute of wild emotion, "fit to write passions for the souls below." He was more than audacious in his freethinking, and he seems to have



been strangely wild in his talk : but there lay in him the seed of the sanity of true genius ; and had he been granted but another decade, he might, despite his serious lack of humour, have left us something of Olympian mastery, the fruition of the Titanic power that was struck down when he had but attained the age at which Shakespeare produced *Venus and Adonis*. His epitaph is for ever that of his own lines :

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,  
And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough  
That sometime grew within this learned man.

Two university men of the day, Robert Greene the novelist and George Peele the poet, were at once fascinated by Marlowe, copying him, from the moment of his appearance, in vocabulary, style, and theme ; and Kyd was no less magnetized. Greene, with much less of original creative power, found in drama, where he followed Marlowe's lead, a path to achievement such as he evidently could not have reached in his tediously fluent prose tales. His two early plays, *Orlando Furioso* and *Alphonsus King of Arragon*, are so much facile but uninspired pot-boiling ; but when he followed Marlowe's *Faustus* with *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* he revealed a power which Marlowe had not shown, that of presenting a recognizably real woman, tender and true, the moral superior of the men

around her; and in *King James the Fourth*, Queen Dorothea, named after the poet's own wronged and forgiving wife, forecasts the noblest types of womanhood in Shakespeare. It is this special power of perception and presentment in Greene that makes him quite conceivably the author of the unsigned play *Edward III*, of which the second act is so remarkable for its dramatic power that, like *Arden of Feversham*, it has been conjecturally assigned by many critics to Shakespeare. But the style is not Shakespeare's, though he copied two of the lines in his Sonnets; and the situation of the tempter-king and the virtuous woman is one which Greene had handled half-a-dozen times in his signed tales and plays, notably in *James IV*.

If *Edward III* be his, he is at least as likely as Marlowe to have written the anonymous *Selimus*, a reflex of *Tamburlaine*, compounded of much rant and not a little powerful Marlowesque propaganda in what was then supposed to be the spirit of Machiavelli. The best passages might be Marlowe's own; but whereas the lawless egotists in Marlowe's plays always fall, the execrable Selimus remains unpunished and triumphant. And this suggests the hand of Greene, who is morally less sane than his great model. His heroes, like himself, sin habitually against good feeling even when they are not presented as defiers of moral law; and the

account he has given of himself in his death-bed performance, *A Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592), presents a character vicious in grain as well as in life. Yet it was his hand that first put upon the Elizabethan stage the figures of admirable women "nobly planned," fountains of goodness in an evil world, idealized, of course, yet more real than the men about them. Women of the contrary type, of whom he had met many, he hardly ever brings upon his scene.

But Greene's importance in the Elizabethan drama is not fully to be measured by his signed plays. It is proved by several testimonies that he wrote many more than the half-dozen now printed as his. Nashe tells that he was "chief agent for the [Queen's] company" of players, and "writ more than four other"; Chettle declared that he was in his time "the only comedian of a vulgar [= popular] writer in this country"; and an admirer, with the initials R. B., claimed in 1594 that

the men that so eclipsed his fame  
Purloined his plumes: can they deny the same?

Nashe further pronounces that in "plotting plays" he was "his craft's master." All this tells not only of a wide vogue, but of a probable survival in some form of Greene's "purloined" work. As the Queen's company, which broke up at the end of 1591, had been

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managed by Richard Burbage, who was afterwards one of the partners with Shakespeare in the Lord Chamberlain's, it seems highly probable that a number of Greene's comedies passed into the repertory of the latter, and were freshly adapted or re-written for it by its rising dramatist, the young Shakespeare. How far the debt extended we cannot tell; but debt there surely was.

George Peele, the first in order of advent, but not in importance, of the group of university men who as playwrights cleared the ground for Shakespeare, has left nothing so fine as Greene's best work, and nothing so powerful as Marlowe's. There is something of poetry in his slight *Old Wives' Tale*, and something of idyllic grace in his early pastoral, *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584); but his elaborate *David and Bethsabe* is rather a rhetorical exercise in play form than a creative drama. He has little command of the living voice, and seems most at home in writing patriotic or courtly "occasional" verse, though that too is generally laboured. His *Edward I* is the most unpleasant of all the many chronicle-plays of the time; and his *Battle of Alcazar*—which like *Tamburlaine* yielded an absurd passage of which the young Shakespeare made fun—has no line in itself memorable. His surest title to commemoration is that he shared with Greene and Marlowe and other dramatists in the compo-

sition of one or other of certain plays which, being acquired by Shakespeare's company and in some cases more or less fully revised by him, have come down to us bearing the master's name—to wit, *King John*, *Henry V*, the *Henry VI* trilogy, *Richard III*, and, it may even be, *Richard II*. Peele, further, certainly had a main hand in *Titus Andronicus*, where Shakespeare's hand cannot at all be traced with confidence; and he was probably one of the first draughtsmen of *Romeo and Juliet*, where the "gallop apace" speech still hints of his phraseology—and his taste.

The novelist Thomas Lodge, ostensibly the least theatrically productive of the four scholars of the Marlowe-Greene group, is the most elusive. We have from him only one complete signed play, *Marius and Sylla*; or, *The Wounds of Civil War*, probably written about 1588, published in 1594; and one composite signed play, the *Looking Glass for London*, in which (about 1590) he collaborated with Greene; but it is nearly certain that he shared in other pieces. *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, published in 1591, has a number of his favourite phrases and peculiar words; and its whole versification closely resembles that of the *Wounds*. As to life, he was on the whole the most fortunate, though he, like the rest, underwent many hardships. Getting a medical degree at Avignon in 1596, he followed serious courses, publish-

ing a translation of Josephus in 1602, a *Treatise of the Plague* in 1603, and a translation of Seneca in 1614; and lived till 1625, having long survived the Bohemian playwright-comrades of his youth.

On the strength of his signed dramatic work he counts for little; but if he were the author of the *Troublesome Raigne*, and also, as there is some reason to think, joint author with Kyd of the old *King Leir and his Three Daughters*, written between 1592 and 1594; and still more if he be the author of *A Warning for Fair Women*, he played an important part in the rapid evolution which we have already in part followed. *Marius and Sylla* is strenuously monotonous in key, and in diction Marlowesque, rhetorical, conventional, inclining more to the French than to the native models; while its comic scenes are gross anachronisms. The *Looking Glass*, again, is withheld by its pseudo-Biblical framework from homogeneous truth. But the *Troublesome Raigne* has plenty of primitive vigour; *King Leir*, albeit utterly transcended by Shakespeare's entirely individual handling of the same theme, is no mean prelude to that; and the *Warning for Fair Women* (1594 or later) is only less notable as an essay in realism than *Arden*, which indeed it so resembles in theme as to raise question whether it be not from the same hand.

Upon many such questions of authorship

we are still in uncertainty ; and there has been much futile guess-work ; but the method of critical analysis which definitely assigns *Arden* to Kyd will probably one day clear up many other problems. Of the *Warning*, and of another play which has been conjecturally connected with Lodge, the '*Larum for London* (1599), we can but say that they show the same progression from conventional to creative art, from pseudo-classicism to realism, as is to be noted in the work of Marlowe, Kyd, and Greene. The *Warning* is written in simple and mostly pedestrian blank verse, taking the way of Kyd, and presenting a tragedy of lust and crime on the levels of London bourgeois life, closely following, as does *Arden*, the records of an actual murder trial. The Induction, which suggests another hand, is a protest against the tragedy of slaughterous tyrants and avenging ghosts, very much in the spirit of Jonson's Prologue to his *Every Man in his Humour*, produced in the previous year. "I must have passions that must move the soul," says Tragedy, whipping History and Comedy off the stage ; and the cold, hard tale of vicious folly, craft, and murder goes deliberately on to the finale of retribution. The action aims at producing illusion by rigorous verisimilitude of detail. Such plays could give small pretext for the charge of immorality against the stage ; sin is tracked and doomed with the grimmest moral purpose ; and tales

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were told in this connexion—as in *Hamlet*—of how guilty creatures before such spectacles were driven to confession and the payment of the last penalty. Shakespeare, always a poet, was not to take the realistic way in tragedy; but such plays as this, written for his company, influenced him in his work; and verbal echoes of the *Warning*, in which he may actually have played, occur in *Macbeth*.

The '*Larum for London*', by whomsoever written, shows rather more poetic power than any other play ascribed to Lodge; and it is impossible to be sure that the vigorous verse is not in part from the hand of Marlowe, which, if not present, is certainly imitated. The "moral" of the play, the need for proper provision for men who have served their country as soldiers, is one affirmed by him; and the siege of Antwerp, which the play presents, is one which we know to have interested him.

Little of the other surviving work of the group of pre-Shakespeareans remains memorable; but to that group we must assign the important credit of having evolved the chronicle play, in the revision and adaptation of which Shakespeare did some of his first dramatic task-work. The three plays on the reign of Henry VI, published with his in 1623, are certainly but adaptations of previous plays in which Marlowe, Peele, and Greene, and possibly Kyd, Drayton, and Lodge, colla-



borated ; and *1 Henry VI* seems to be mainly the work of the first three, with, it would seem, additions by Drayton. The opening lines have the sign manual of Marlowe. One eminent authority has inclined to assign to Shakespeare the "Roses" scene, and another the Talbot scenes in the fourth act. But the Roses scene, with its notably high percentage of verses with double-endings, is much more likely to have been the late work of Marlowe ; and the Talbot scenes carry no suggestion of the style of Shakespeare, though we cannot tell how far he may have intervened as reviser. An alternative hypothesis assigns the Talbot scenes to Drayton—a much more likely solution. The odious presentment of Joan of Arc cannot conceivably be Shakespeare's, but it is only too likely to be Peele's ; and Margaret, in this and the later plays, often suggests the hand of Greene. In *Richard III* there appears to be much of the work of Marlowe and Greene, with notable verbal traces of Kyd ; and the crude vigour of Richard's self-description belongs to Marlowe alike in style and conception. This play we know exhibits a multitude of divergences as between the Quarto of 1597 and the Folio of 1623 ; but there are insuperable objections to the view that the differences in the later version, even when they are improvements, stand for corrections made by Shakespeare. They are often demonstrably the work of one who had

not understood the original text; and the long passages in the Folio which are lacking in the Quarto are evidently not additions but portions of the prior text which had been excluded from an acting copy by way of stage curtailment. With these restored, the Quarto gives substantially the true text, and it cannot be all Shakespeare's. It is not credible that *he* made the ghost of Henry VI say to Richard :

When I was mortal, my anointed body  
By thee was punched full of deadly holes.

Even in *Henry V* there is some ground for misgiving as to authorship. The foolish line :

Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,

if it be Shakespeare's, is the worst he ever wrote; and inasmuch as the choruses are noticeably unlike his style, but, like the admittedly non-Shakespearean prologue to *Troilus and Cressida*, closely resemble that of the prologues of Dekker, it may be that in this play also we have some work of other men. It would be satisfactory to be able to believe as much with regard to the gross savagery of Henry's speech in Act III, Scene 3.

Not the least effective of the old chronicle series is *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, anonymously published in 1591, but probably written, as aforesaid, by Thomas

Lodge. Of all the early model-plays in the case of which we are able to compare an original with Shakespeare's reworking, this best bears the comparison; and it is probably to the inspiration of Marlowe that it owes its strongest features. Shakespeare does but refine and invigorate the portraiture and the plot, removing as he always did the more fanatical features. An interesting hint as to the procedure of recomposition, however, lies in the herald's speeches in the second act. In the old play, these are in prose; in Shakespeare's they are in verse; and the verse is clearly not Shakespeare's. Evidently there were possibilities of the intervention of minor hands.

The importance of the early chronicle plays lies not so much in their literary merit, which, on the whole, is not high, as in their function of effecting the transition from academic to what we may term "humanist" tragedy. At one end of the evolution comes *Ferrex and Porrex*; at the other end lie *Faustus* and *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. It was by way of the presentment of modern historical characters, partly limned in the light of recent history, that drama moved from pseudo-classic rhetoric and non-action to the free play of life, whether of history, legend, fiction, or criminal trial. And the freedom to do this was part of the gain from the clean sweep made in English public

life by the rise of the Tudor dynasty and the further clearing away of the past at and after the Reformation. The personal (not economic) protection given to the player companies by the nobles who nominally employed them, was the remaining requisite for a free dramatic handling of history. Had the French stage had similar liberty to deal with the near historic past it might have evolved a more realistic tragedy which should have escaped the academic reaction typified in Corneille. But the political conditions in the two countries were vitally different. In both, recent home history was alike taboo; and not till the reign of James could English playwrights touch even remotely on the tragic record of the ghastly house of Tudor, the father with his bloodstained hands, the daughters born of mothers dishonoured or slain. But plays which gibbeted Richard Crookback were pleasant enough to Tudor ears; the fuller treatment of the wars of York and Lancaster naturally followed; patriotic and Protestant sentiment in turn welcomed the chronicles in which the first and third Edwards and Henry V played the hero-king; and even the dubious King John could be made to figure as the champion of English liberty against the Pope. The anger of the Court at the revival of *Richard II* on the occasion of the Essex conspiracy showed the danger which might upon occasion attach

to the exploitation of history ; but the free field was large. In France, the factor of the Church alone excluded any such free handling of the nation's past : if the people had been ready to pedestal Joan of Arc, the Church would not have allowed it.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the mere play of patriotism in England was the inspiring force in the vitalizing of the serious drama. The chronicle plays, as we have seen, were not as a whole great work ; and what is best in them has least to do with patriotism. The notable part of *Edward III* is entirely outside the historic action ; the strongest play of all, *Edward II*, like *Richard II*, presents a humiliated king, of whom the nation was ashamed ; and in later history the ground is chiefly occupied with the *Henry VI* trilogy and *Richard III*, in which the themes are national defeat, regal wickedness, and civil war. Patriotic fervour is not the inspiration of great drama. What the chronicle play really did was to conduct the stage by the line of least resistance to poetic realism in drama, the distinctive excellence of Elizabethan literature, which at this point is epoch-making for the world. It was the chronicle play, represented at nearly its moral worst by Peele's *Edward I* and the Pucelle scenes of *1 Henry VI*, that made possible *Romeo and Juliet*, of which Peele was probably one of the draughtsmen.

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All along, at its best and at its worst alike, the growth proceeded under a constant fire of social hostility. The Elizabethan age is not any more than others to be thought of at any time as one of homogeneous national life : it was rather a perpetual clash of antagonistic forces, Protestant against Catholic, Presbyterian against Prelatist, England against Ireland, Court clique against Court clique, Puritan and poet against popular playmakers, and playwright against playwright. No invective was fiercer or more continuous than that continuously poured out against all manner of stage-plays by pious and other moralists down to the period when, under the Commonwealth, the theatres were closed. Spenser and Sidney in the pre-Shakespearean days gave it small welcome ; and Bacon later showed it no more favour. Its vitality was thus native, alike on the economic and the artistic side ; and its leafage was that of the tree which grows strong by battling with the winds.

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE GREAT PROSE

DRAYTON, retrospectively scolding L'illy and the Euphuists in his old age, speaks of them as

Talking of Stones, Stars, Plants, of Fishes, Flies,  
Playing with words and idle similes ;  
As the English Apes and very Zanies be  
Of everything that they do hear and see,

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So imitating his ridiculous tricks,  
They spake and writ, all like mere lunatiques.

And it is to Sidney, "that heroë for numbers and for prose," that he gives the credit of having "reduced" our tongue from Euphuism, and

throughly pac'd our language as to show  
That plenteous English hand in hand might go  
With Græek and Latin.

The praise seems to be strictly just, though Drayton does not go into any detail.

It was not, however, by his most popular work that Sidney did his best service to English prose. The famous *Arcadia*, like nearly every other new departure in Tudor literature, was produced by a foreign stimulus: in this case, contact with the old Greek romance of Heliodorus, entitled *The Ethiopic History*. Underdown's English version of that work was first published about 1569; and about 1580 Sidney was at work upon his own romance. His praise of Heliodorus in the *Apology for Poetry* is proof that he had read him; but the fact might have been known from the first chapter of the *Arcadia*, so closely does it imitate the narrative method of the ancient novelist. This was not the way to attain either vitality in storytelling or strength of style; and the *Arcadia*, with all its artificial charm, exhibits neither. The opening sentence has 145 words, the

second 203 ; and both are shambling, shapeless, and devoid of balance. Further, they are tainted with Euphuism, and with something worse : witness the phrases : “ Where we last (alas that the word *last* should so long last) did gaze ” [? *grace* or *graze*] “ our eyes upon her ever-flourishing beauty.” After this one feels that the good sentences are windfalls ; and that the writer, however gifted, was on this side immature.

Nor does Sidney show any original faculty for prose—or even a keen eye for normal construction—in his portion of the translation of the French treatise *De la Vérité de la Religion chrestienne* of his friend De Mornay—a task which he began, but had to leave to his friend, Arthur Golding, to finish (1587). The opening sentence runs :

Such as make profession to teach us, do say they never find less what to say *than* when the thing which they treat of is more manifest and more known of itself *than* all that can be alleged for the setting forth thereof.

It faithfully follows the original. Golding, had he had any natural gift, might have acquired a prose style from Calvin, many of whose volumes he translated into English, thereby helping to affect the development of English prose anew as it had been affected fifty years before by the early Protestant controversy. Calvin was a great prose writer : the voluble De Mornay was not, and Sidney



probably learned little from translating him. He was to become a masterly writer by following once more his own precept to himself for poetry: "Look in thy heart and write."

It is in the posthumous *Apology for Poetry*, published nine years after his death, that he "reduces" English prose from insincerity and convention to a masculine simplicity and strength. The theme was one on which he must already have thought and felt much; and when the brawling Stephen Gosson, repenting of his own unsuccessful work as a playwright, published his *School of Abuse* (1579) in denunciation alike of plays and poetry, with an unwarranted dedication to the young aristocrat who was already writing sonnets to Stella, the inscription was unwelcome. Sidney let two years pass before writing his essay, variously entitled a *Defence of Poesy* and an *Apology for Poetrie*; and the result of his deliberation was the most finished and distinguished piece of "literary" prose that had yet been produced in English. Here there is none of the nervous haste and loquacity of the *Arcadia*: the essay begins, as it ends, on a note of quiet humour: the sentences, with rare exceptions, are at once fluent and controlled, easeful and balanced; the construction close, and the diction pure. Above all, the thought is fresh, and vital even where it is not scientifically valid. The bane

of serious secular literature thus far had been platitude : only in 1580 had Montaigne's *Essais* begun the modern era of untrammelled "criticism of life" ; and English readers, not surfeited with *Euphues*, were still capable of assimilating repeated issues of translations of the *Golden Epistles* (1575, 1582) and the *Familiar Epistles* (1574) of the interminable Guevara. It was a new experience for them, even in 1595, to meet in their own tongue with such prose and such thinking as this of Sidney's :

The Physician weigheth the nature of a man's body and the nature of things helpful or hurtful unto it. And the Metaphysick [=metaphysician], though it be in the second and abstract notions, and therefore be counted supernatural, yet doth he build upon the depth of Nature : only the Poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature, as the Heroes, Demigods and Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like : so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the Zodiac of his own wit.

Nature never sets forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers Poets have done ; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers : nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen : the Poets only deliver a golden. . . .

This is greater prose than anything in the

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*Arcadia*: greater literature than most of Sidney's verse. And it comes to print in the great decade of Elizabethan prose.

The literary value of Sidney's *Apology* is best realized by comparing it with the *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* previously written by Thomas Lodge (1580), in direct and controversial reply to Gosson. Lodge also was a scholar and a poet, with a notable facility in verse; but in no respect does his performance approach to any rivalry with Sidney's. It is written in headlong haste on the first provocation of resentment, and with no thought of psychic or logical construction. Lodge leaps forth to taunt and counter-rail the railer, and does it with all the Elizabethan volubility and simplicity of dialectic, largely by way of a multitude of queries. "What made Africanus esteem Ennius? Why did Alexander give praise to Achilles, but for the praises he found written of him in Homer? Why esteemed Pompey so much of Theophanes Mitiletus? or Brutus so greatly the writings of Accius?" He has plenty of learning, and is often rapturous in his passion for the Muses. "I wish you," he cries, "to account well of this heavenly concert, which is full of perfection proceeding from above, drawing his original from the motion of the stars, from the agreement of the planets, from the whistling winds, and from all those celestial circles where is either perfect agreement or

any *Symphonia*." But the prose is breathless and the syntax elementary—a mere hasty heaping-up of clauses, without composition. Lodge, in virtue of his zest and energy, figured more or less creditably in a multitude of literary forms ; but to the great art of prose he contributed nothing.

It would seem that temperament counted for more than literary training. The *Apologie* had been preceded by a briefer and less gracious, but still a notable masterpiece, lengthily entitled *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of the Açores, this last Summer, betwixt the Revenge, one of her Majesties Shippes, and an Armada of the King of Spaine* (1591). This was the work of Raleigh, another of the masters of prose. It was followed, four years later, by a poem from Jervase Markham, *The Most Honorable Tragedie of Sir Richard Grinvile, Knight*, written, to use a phrase of its author, "with over-labouring toil." The poem is in every respect inferior to the prose *Report*, which makes its unique effect by a grave and effortless simplicity. Even its long sentences keep their balance. The preliminary vaunt over the defeat of the Armada, put forth by way of retort to Spanish boasts, is done with a stern exactness of detail, and with hardly a touch of rhetoric ; and the story of the tremendous fight of the *Revenge* is told with a calm intensity that transcends declamation. It is to be feared that there is some

exaggeration in the figures and in the measure of the damage to the *Revenge*, for she remained navigable; and the contemporary account of Linschoten, who tells of Grenville's savageries in the way of chewing glass, speaks of only seven or eight Spanish ships as boarding the Englishman. But there is no exaggeration in the style:

All the powder of the *Revenge* to the last barrel was now spent, all her pikes broken, forty of her best men slain, and the most part of the rest hurt. In the beginning of the fight she had but one hundreth free from sickness, and fourscore and ten sick, laid in hold upon the ballast. A small troop of men to such a ship, and a weak garrison to resist so mighty an army. By those hundred all was sustained, the volleys, boardings, and entrings of fifteen ships of war, besides those which beat her at large. On the contrary, the Spanish were always supplied with soldiers brought from every squadron; all manner of arms, and powder at will. Unto ours there remained no comfort at all, no hope, no supply either of ships, men, or weapons; the masts all beaten overboard, all her tackle cut asunder, her upper work altogether razed; and in effect evened she was with the water—but the very foundation or bottom of a ship, nothing being left overhead either for flight or defence.

Markham in comparison is turgid, blatant, and sometimes ridiculous:

But poor *Revenge*, less rich, and not so great,  
Answered her cuff for cuff, and threat for threat.

Prose had come into her own. It is noteworthy that these prize-pieces are penned by

cultured men of action, who partly found the secret of distinction in the school of life, in camps and courts. Poets, scholars, fighters, thinkers, they made for themselves at length a prose fit to affirm their most earnest thought; and Raleigh's Preface to his *History of the World* shows him to have gone as far into philosophy as almost any man of his generation. Sidney passed away in the splendid morning of his life: Raleigh, living through a tempestuous day to a tragic night, collects himself at the close of his long and generally pedestrian prison-task, *The History of the World*, and takes leave of life with a superb gesture:

O eloquent, just and mighty death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawn together all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet*.

This, like Sidney's, is prose raised to the plane of fine art: Raleigh's best verses, among which we may rank those on the same theme, have not more gift of duration. Perhaps the most truly artistic writing of the same period, as it happens, is that produced by one of the new tribe of writers who lived by their pens. It was drama that first made their way of life possible, in England as in Italy; and it is alongside of the Marlowe group that we first

find one who puts out most of his effort in prose. Nashe had no success in drama ; and no real gift for verse ; but in prose he reveals a faculty which could stamp distinction upon scurrility, and compass beauty of rhythm in a treatise penned either for writing's sake or for gain. His first essay, *The Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589), is too strained and breathless to be rhythmical, and is touched with Euphuism, though Nashe afterwards denied it, protesting that he had never employed the vocabulary of stones and beasts. His anti-Martinist writings, too, early and late, are not enjoyable. But in *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Divell* (1592) he has attained at once the command of his rich native humour and the singular opulence and elasticity of construction in which he surpasses every writer of his day. Nashe gives the impression of a singer who cannot lose breath. His clauses are not merely juxtaposed : they are interfluent ; and his flow is inexhaustible whether he is grave or gay :

All malcontent sits the greasy son of a clothier, and complains (like a decayed earl) of the ruin of ancient houses ; whereas the weavers' looms first framed the web of his honour, and the locks of wool that bushes and brambles have took toll of insolent sheep that would needs strive for the wall of a fir-bush, have made him of the tenths of their tar a squire of low degree ; and of the collections of their scatterlings a Justice, *tam Marti quam Mercurio*, of Peace and of Coram.

Gabriel Harvey was a good scholar and a man of capacity, despite his efforts to persuade Spenser to write English verse in quantitative classical measures; but in his wrangles with Nashe he is simply overwhelmed by an adversary who could have out-railed Thersites and out-rallied Falstaff. When Nashe becomes serious his style subsides to a restful rhythm, which, in the half-superstitious, half-whimsical *Terrors of the Night* (1594), anticipates in no small degree the perfect cadences of Sir Thomas Browne. He is neither thinker nor poet: prose is his true medium, and he talks because he must. What he lacks is sufficiency of message. Had Nashe ever been possessed by a great purpose, or cared to pursue sheer beauty of diction, he could have made a finer music than any of that age. As it is, in his *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* (1593), preaching penitence in plague-time and professing to put craftsmanship far from him, he is instinctively harmonious, endlessly fertile in phrase and trope.

But the true Nashe is best to be savoured from his *Lenten Stuffe*, otherwise *The Praise of the Red Herring* (1599), where the avowed business of book-making is conducted with a full-handed wealth of humour and fancy which constantly recalls the different abundance of Shakespeare. Critics dwell upon his wilful Rabelaisian minting of "huge words,"



which he brazenly justifies on the score that English runs unduly to monosyllables ; but that is merely the supererogation of the humorist. Over the Red Herring he can expatiate as Mercutio on Queen Mab : any theme will serve for this prince of improvisators. As he puts it :

Every man can say bee to a battledore, and write in praise of virtue and the seven liberal sciences, thresh corn out of the full sheaves and fetch water from the Thames ; but out of dry stubble to make an after harvest, and a plentiful crop without sowing, and wring juice out of a flint, that's *Pierce a God's name*, and the right trick of a workman.

It is as if Falstaff had taken to earning his living by his pen ; with a power of ever-springing prose such as Shakespeare did not possess. In his ten years of writing for the booksellers, living from hand to mouth like the wild brotherhood of playmakers with whom he mixed, Nashe passed as rapidly and as completely from apprenticeship to mastery in his mystery as any of them all. His short and heedless life was after all spent to some purpose.

Naturally, it was through a very different discipline that the great writers of grave prose came to their accomplishment. In that field the two towering names of those last dozen years of Elizabeth's day are those of Hooker and Bacon, men alike greatly charged with unattainable ideals and endowed with gifts

of utterance commensurate to their purposes. In them the rapid intellectual ripening which we have noted in so many belletrists of the time is revealed in a pregnancy of thought which has no parallel in Tudor literature of previous generations, with the unique exception of More. Down till the last twenty years of Elizabeth's life, prose writing, apart from theological controversy and chronicle, is in the main alternately juvenile and platitudinous, even as poetry is experimental or conventional. Philosophy in the strict sense could not be said to exist in native form; what ranks as moral philosophy was little more than a gathering of wise saws and modern instances; and what passed for criticism of life was a more or less laboured re-arrangement of old mosaics. With Hooker and Bacon the race seems to step into maturity; the faculty of speech keeping pace with the faculty of thought.

Neither indeed was a full-fledged philosopher in either the ancient or the modern sense, both having rather practical than speculative ends in view: but ethical and political philosophy, deeply meditated, are among the great disciplines; and Hooker, brooding over the practically insoluble problem of sectarian dissension, attained to a grasp of rational social science approached thus far by no modern save Bodin. Some of the cardinal ideas of Hobbes and Hume are drawn from his pages; and he will be found at points

both anticipating Locke and countering in advance one of his philosophical makeshifts. Such thinking was fit inspiration for high prose, given a high ratiocinative purpose; and Hooker, who had visibly read much of Calvin as well as of other theology, early and late, writes English with a closeness of logical texture no less masterly than his management of the æsthetic effects of rhythm and cadence. Some, doubtless, will always prefer the more lyric flights in which his religious temperament, which seems to function almost independently of the rationalistic, rises to a rapturous eloquence. Of this there is a fine example at the end of his First Sermon. But those who are interested to know how rich and powerful Elizabethan prose can be, how intellectually satisfying in diction and how energetic in idiom, will always turn to the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. The temperaments of Hooker and Hobbes had as little in common as might be; but they are peers in their perfect literary craftsmanship, their identification of argument with style, and that wealth of undefiled and unconventionalized English which preserves for us a perfume as of old wine.

Bacon adds to English even a richer grace. In the lofty fanaticism of his mission to regenerate and reconstruct all science—a task for which he had no adequate scientific preparation—he professed to disdain the pre-

occupation with style which he saw hampering the thought of so many of his predecessors in the European field of Renaissance physics and cosmosophy. But, fathered and mothered by a judge and a scholarly woman, and brought up in the full play of Elizabethan word-warfare of all kinds, he was a literary artist born and made. His literary power in fact outgoes his scientific competence; and only that power and the intensity of his purpose save him on that side from oblivion. But where he applies his peculiar gift for criticism and analysis of men and polity, character and conduct and intellectual proclivity, he is one of the master writers of his race. The *Essays*, of which the first handful appeared in 1598, were inspired by those of Montaigne; but Bacon takes absolutely his own way. The ruling tendencies of Montaigne are discursiveness and self-revelation: those of Bacon are concision and objectivity. Slight as his first volume is, never before in English had so much matter been packed into so little room, so many themes that had been buried in commonplace lifted to new life. Four-fifths of the essays, however, belong to the reign of James and the later years of Bacon's life; and it must be admitted that the ten essays of the first issue (printed by Bacon only under the pressure of imminent piracy) weigh little as against the large treasure of Montaigne.

What may rightly be included in the last Elizabethan decade is the *Advancement of Learning* (1603), Bacon's most considerable treatise in English. After his fall he was to expand it into a bulky treatise in Latin, with seven Books added to the original two. This resort to Latin, on the double motive of his need to seek continental readers after his official disgrace, and his real but strangely wrong disbelief in the permanence of literature in the modern tongues, is one of the chagrins of the lover of English. Bacon wrote Latin no better than a hundred other men; whereas no man of his latter day could write English as he did. The all-round enrichment of the *Essays* in the later editions is warrant for saying that if he had been content to use his mother-tongue for all his work, he would have produced the finest body of native prose that ever stood to one man's credit. The extraordinary intellectual brilliance of the opening book of the *Novum Organum*, which shines through every translation, would have been still more lustrous in the noble English in which he could have couched it. As it is, we can but note the irony of fate in the fact that he put into English the bulky *Sylva Sylvarum* or *Natural History*, a farrago of obsolete physics and obsolete physic, which, popular for some generations, has no lasting importance whatever.

Already in the *Advancement* Bacon is a

master of spacious no less than of sententious style. Hooker is eloquent under stress of religious emotion ; Bacon can be so in an intellectual exposition, his diction heightening and his cadence expanding to a rhythmic swell that arouses more of the sensations of poetry than does a great deal of Elizabethan verse. Even before the *Advancement*, it would seem, he had written the *Valerius Terminus*, one of a number of preludes and summaries in which he reached out towards his "Great Instauration." By him it was put aside, and only upon its accidental discovery was it published, a hundred years after his death. And yet here, in a mere unfinished draft, we have some of the stateliest prose in our literature :

The dignity of this end (of endowment of man's life with new commodities) appeareth by the estimation that antiquity made of such as guided thereunto. For whereas founders of States, lawgivers, extirpers of tyrants, fathers of the people, were honoured but with the titles of Worthies or Demigods, inventors were ever consecrated amongst the Gods themselves. And if the ordinary ambitions of men lead them to seek the amplification of their power in their countries, and a better ambition than that hath moved them to seek the amplification of the power of their own countries amongst other nations, better again and more worthy must that aspiring be which seeketh the amplification of the power and kingdom of mankind over the world ; the rather because the other two prosecutions are ever culpable of much perturbation and injustice ; but this is a work truly divine, which cometh *in aura leni*, without noise or observation.

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They err who ascribe to Bacon a "cold" nature. In the normal affections, whether of love or hate, he was not ardent, but his devotion to his great ideal was truly a passion. At the close of the first book of the *Advancement* it pulsates into as high a strain as any singer's :

Lastly, leaving the vulgar arguments that by learning man excelleth man in that wherein man excelleth beasts ; that by learning man ascendeth to the heavens and their motions, where in body he cannot come ; and the like ; let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire ; which is immortality or continuance ; for to this tendeth generation, and raising of houses and families ; to this buildings, foundations, and monuments ; to this tendeth the desire of memory, fame, and celebration ; and in effect, the strength of all other human desires. We see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years or more, without the loss of a syllable or letter : during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished ? It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Caesar, no nor of the kings or great personages of much later years ; for the originals cannot last, and copies cannot but leese of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledges remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages. So that if the invention of the ship was thought

so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits, how much more are letters to be magnified, which as ships pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions, the one of the other ?

Neither under Elizabeth nor under James were there many Englishmen capable of rising to this appeal. Ben Jonson, with his quick response to all intellectual pressures, declared the greatness of the fallen Chancellor even as he did that of the dead Shakespeare ; but it was the fate of England, forlornly foreseen by Bacon, to drift for a generation through ecclesiastical strifes that culminated in a long civil war, rather than to attempt the way of scientific research to which he prematurely beckoned them. He was thus the prophet of times to come.

And thus it comes about, too, that we are left looking back to the Elizabethan time as to one of a rich artistic florescence, not maintained through the generation which followed. Elizabeth's reign had in fact been a time of signal receptiveness to foreign influence, fortunately assimilated. Bacon's scientific interests had been aroused mainly by foreign treatises in Latin and by the general critical reaction against the worship of Aristotle. The new drama had been nourished by Italian and Spanish fiction ; the new poetry inspired by Italian and French models ; and the new



prose owed much to the practice of translation. In the year 1603, along with Bacon's *Advancement*, there appeared two of the greatest performances in that kind thus far seen : the rendering of Plutarch's *Moralia* by Philemon Holland, and that of Montaigne's *Essays* by John Florio ; alike in point of content and style the most readable folios of their day. Scores of translations of ancient classics and modern histories had already appeared ; but only a few with any authentic charm. Sir Thomas North's version of Plutarch's *Lives*, made from the French version of Amyot, is the best known of these, with its strong simplicity of old-world phrase. That of two Books of Herodotus by " B. R. " (1584), and Underdowne's version of Heliodorus, are in different degrees racy of the native speech : others, such as Fenton's translation of Guicciardini's Italian history (1579), made through the French, are decidedly dry reading. It must have been a vigorous appetite for information that carried Fenton's folio of nigh twelve hundred pages into a second edition in a dozen years. Thomas Danett's rendering of the French history of Comines (1596) is much more appetizing, proceeding as it does upon a much more naïve original, and couched as it is in the more artless style of 1566, when Danett first framed it. There we may read " how the two Kings met and sware the treaty before concluded ; and

how some supposed that the Holy Ghost came down upon the King of England's pavilion in the likeness of a white pigeon "; and also more edifying matters. Comines had a real critical stimulus for Elizabethans, dating though he did two generations back. Danett's rendering of " The Conclusion of the Author " to his sixth book, which ends with the death of Louis XI, is quaintly charming :

Now see here a great number of personages dead in short space, who travelled [=travailed] so mightily, and endured so many anguishes and sorrows to purchase honour and renoume, whereby they abridged their lives, yea and peradventure charged their souls. I speak not this of the Turk ; for I make account he is lodged with his predecessors [*i.e.* in bale] ; but our King and the rest, I trust, God hath taken to his mercy. Now, to speak of this point as a man unlearned, but having some experience : had it not been better both for these great Princes themselves and all their subjects that lived under them, and shall live under their successors, to have held a mean in all things, that is to say, to have attempted fewer enterprises, to have feared more to offend God, and persecute their subjects and neighbours so many sundry ways above rehearsed, and to have used honest pleasures and recreation ? Yes sure. For by that means their lives should have been prolonged, diseases should not so soon have assailed them, their death should have been more lamented and less desired ; yea, and they should have had less cause to fear death. . . .

This is the main purport of the historical criticism of Raleigh, in his monumental work.

But the translation of histories did not

give opportunity for the fullest use or evolution of the resources of the language ; and it is to Holland's Plutarch and Florio's Montaigne that we turn for the spectacle. Holland, a mighty scholar, who produced a whole barrow-load of huge translations—Pliny, Livy, Ammianus, Suetonius—besides his Plutarch, must have looked askance at the company in which that folio came out, both for its modernity and its matter ; but he and Florio are kindred craftsmen in their handling of the language. What they impress us with above all is its opulence. They are going to print in folio, and they are not fidgety about space. Each had a copious author to render, and each was zealous rather to expand than to compress. Florio had the advantage in respect of the unmatched spontaneity and vitality of his original, who comes into the literature of Europe with almost the force of another Renaissance, so potently does he extend that "discovery of man" which has been declared to be the purport of the period so named. But Montaigne was nourished on antiquity, and Plutarch's *Moralia* is the nearest classic equivalent to his mass of multiform commentary on men and things. To that undue reverence for antiquity which Bacon oppugned with special regard to the authority of Aristotle, Montaigne was the supreme corrective ; and in Florio's hands he loses nothing of his wholesome provocativeness, albeit there are

frequent mistakes as to the meaning in minor propositions. In a society much addicted to old and crusted commonplace, it was a liberalizing and expanding experience to meet with a man who was as ready to flout a custom, an authority, or a convention as to condemn thoughtless neologism, and whose self-disclosure is a continuous series of awakening shocks to dull propriety. Bacon's polemic against the reign of Aristotle is but one of Montaigne's defiances to enthroned tradition: he has a thrust at every abuse and every prejudice. Here, too, was an opulence of sheer speech as great as that of Nashe, with a vastly wider and richer range of reflection. A hundred thoughts which have passed for original profundities are thrown out by Montaigne in passing: there is no human problem upon which he does not flash his light. It seems little necessary to prove in detail that he deeply stimulated both Bacon and Shakespeare: it would have been astonishing if he had not.

If Montaigne was not otherwise one of the most important forces in English prose literature from 1603 onwards, it was simply because his multitudinous fresh thought was above the heads of the majority, as indeed it must have been. The normal English mind can never have taken easily to a writer so unconcerned for propriety, so reckless of prejudice, so murderously frank. None the less was it

a boon to our literature that he should have been Englished at the very height of the power of the Elizabethan speech, by one as free of that as Montaigne was of his powerful old French. For the "endenizened" Florio is one of the happiest treasurers of the Elizabethan vocabulary, dealing it out with a generous zest to which only Philemon Holland approximates. More correct translations there could easily be ; but so to seize the spirit and essence of the immortal original as to compete with that in all its literary qualities was a feat reserved for Florio, and indeed possible only to a master of Elizabethan prose.

## CHAPTER VII

### POETRY AFTER SPENSER

SPENSER was fortunate in respect of the foils to his work presented by the contemporary translators who most nearly paralleled it. Obviously Ariosto and Tasso were his main models ; and to compare him, in English verse, with his foreign masters was to realize that the disciple had an art and an inspiration all his own. It may or may not have been the example of Spenser that stirred Sir John Harington and Edward Fairfax to make their translations from Ariosto and Tasso (*Orlando Furioso*, 1591; *Godfrey of Bulloigne*; or, *Jerusalem Delivered*, 1600); but Fairfax is

clearly influenced by him. Their profuse assurances as to the moral and allegorical aims of their originals are warnings against a confiding view of the ethical purpose of Spenser ; but while they doubtless made their market in respect of those claims, they naturally do not attain to the kinds of compensation which he is able to offer for unreality of theme. Harington's sole attraction for a modern student is his exuberant naïveté ; of poetic faculty he has the scantiest endowment. Of Fairfax, certainly a much more careful and competent workman, it was possible for some to speak with warm admiration as late as the first half of the nineteenth century ; but such a taste could not well survive the age of Tennyson ; and indeed it was probably from the first confined to a fastidious few. Possible as a romance for an age which could be fascinated by the florid prolixities of the *Arcadia* and the protracted fictions of Mademoiselle Scudéry, Fairfax's version of the crusading epic of Tasso had small power to hold a world in which successive developments of realistic drama were at length to be eclipsed in living interest by the long evolution of the English novel. The melody and the literary art of the Italian originals inevitably evaporated in the hands of translators without special gifts. Fairfax is always metrically accurate, and is frequently musical in a simply verbal way ; but he is always far short of the Spenserian

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charm, and he has a way of compiling lines which give a permanent monition as to how poetry is not to be written. Such series of vocables as :

A blow so huge, so strong, so great, so sore . . .  
Sleep, ease, repose, rest, peace and quiet brings . . .  
But so doth heaven men's hearts turn, alter, change . . .  
Grief, sorrow, anguish, sadness, discontent . . .  
Jerusalem they view, they see, they spy . . .  
His hate, his ire, his rancour and his wrath . . .  
Their eager rage, their fury, spite, and ire . . .

evidently struck him as impressive, and he chronically presents them. Spenser's padding is often bad enough, critically considered ; but he is never reduced to such mere collation of synonyms. From such patchwork as this, and from allegorical epic in general, the spirit of poetry turned away in the next reign to the more blessed tasks of the drama, of subjective verse—as in Donne, Carew, Herbert, and Crashaw—and of the lyric. Herrick, who occupies himself, strictly speaking, with none of these things, being in truth a polymathic artist in light verse, is the living reminder that for all alike there is one thing needful, the concern for sincerity of feeling and beauty of form.

But round Spenser in his closing years there grew up a whole cluster of sonneteers and narrative poets, who are in their degree as char-

acteristic of the age as he, or as the drama which is its supreme production. And again the stimulus can be seen to come from foreign literatures, now more widely studied than ever; in particular the French. The sonnets of Surrey and Wyatt, inspired by Italian models, had not set any save a private fashion; and it was not till 1584 that Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia*; or, *Passionate Centurie of Love*, began a native movement which was powerfully stimulated by French example, and which after six or seven years developed into a craze.

The first sonnets published in this sequence were quite the worst. Watson avowedly copies French and other models, and he does it unmelodiously, infelicitously, and cheaply. But when he published his first set, many others had been penned and privately circulated for years past. Sidney in particular had already done many of his series to Stella; and in 1591 these were posthumously published, with the effect of eliciting a perfect hubbub of imitation. The *Astrophel and Stella* title set the fashion of poetic names for such series. Samuel Daniel came out next year with his batch to *Delia*, and Henry Constable with his consignment to *Diana*. In 1593 appeared Barnabe Barnes's *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, Lodge's *Phillis*, Giles Fletcher's *Licia*, and another posthumous bundle from Watson, as dead as their diligent



author. Next year came revisions of *Delia* and *Diana*, accompanied by William Percy's *Cælia*, somebody's *Zepheria*, and Drayton's *Idea* (first form); in 1595, Richard Barnfield's *Cynthia*, Spenser's *Amoretti*, and E. C.'s *Emaricdulfe*—an effort at originality in choice of title at least, but only by way of an anagram on the name of one Marie Cufeld. In 1596 high-water mark as to quantity was reached with Griffin's *Fidessa*, Lynch's *Diella*, and William Smith's *Chloris*. A *Laura*, by Robert Tofte, arrived in 1597. Shakespeare by this time had written a number of his sonnets, but was not minded to join the aviary in print, though an average sample of his has more charm and spontaneity than any save the best in the swarm.

Never had there been such an outburst of lyricism in England; and, despite the facility of much of the output, never, perhaps, was there in proportion so little of satisfying result to garner for posterity. The poets at first sight seem a very nest of singing birds, singing because they must, on the ancient, the primal impulse. A perusal soon arouses a cold suspicion, fully confirmed by exact modern research, that the nest of singing birds is a cage of parrots. They translate the French and the Italians, and they imitate each other. Spenser and Sidney alone seem to have had a sincere motive: Sidney's precept, finishing the first sonnet in the post-

humorous collection, was the one thing to which none of the imitators seems to have paid any attention. Daniel, Drayton, Constable, and Lodge copied their very titles; and the three last named include in their series direct but unavowed translations from the French; as does even Spenser at times. Lodge is perhaps the most hardened—and not the least skilful—plagiarist of all: half his sonnets are translations. If ever the sonnet is personal, in the hands of any of the lesser practitioners, it is impossible to divine the fact with certainty from any superior vitality in the product. Sidney had warned the earlier sonneteers:

You that do dictionary's method bring  
 Into your rhymes running in rattling rows;  
 You that poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes  
 With newborn sighs and denizen'd \* wit do sing:  
 You take wrong ways! Those far-fet helps be such  
 As do bewray a want of inward touch.

And in the very delivery of the warning he himself is but turning a compliment to Stella—one of the many which leave men and women still debating whether he was in love with her.

It all raises the question mooted by a poet of our own day, whether most poetry is not written because of *lack* of poetic feeling, by people seeking to set up the mood they crave for. Sidney, doubtless, had some live coals

\* Naturalized in a foreign country.

on his altar ; Daniel could be at times a poet in other forms than that of the sonnet ; Lodge had a genuine gift for lyric ; and Drayton did one of the few really great sonnets of the whole mass, besides moving Shakespeare to direct imitation in one other. Drayton's

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,  
has the ring of actuality, even if it be an imitation ; and Sidney is often enough vibrant with a certain intensity of feeling to leave the problem in his case an open one. But some nine out of ten in the multitude raise no speculation at all beyond wonder at the assiduity with which men went on apostrophizing the "cruel fair" as a stone or a tigress, a flint or a steel. "Those fatal an-thems and afflicted songs," as Daniel justly describes his own, almost move us to join in Sir John Davies's diatribe against the "bastard sonnets" which "base rhymers daily begot to their own shames and poetry's disgrace" ; though he was chiefly disgusted with the quasi-legal stanzas which in his own *Sonnets* he so wittily burlesqued. A plausible theory is that sonneteering was for a time a recognized mode of wooing ; that the variegated apostrophe to the mistress as a thing of marble was a species of compliment highly appreciated ; and that the display of rhyming power operated somewhat as the colouring of the male bird has been supposed

to do in charming the female on humbler levels of life. But on any view the fact remains that this particular impulse from foreign literatures, coming among a people avowedly much given, with all their insularity (perhaps by reason of it), to the copying of foreign fashions, elicited for the most part but un-inspired mimicry, whereas the debt to foreign sources in the case of the drama was as nothing compared with the native energy spent in turning mere tales of incident into creations of character beside which the prototypes are as shadows.

The situation as regards the sonnet was in the end partially saved by Shakespeare, when his manuscripts were published without his leave. He too took to the sonnet under an impulse of imitation, often echoing his contemporaries in phrase and in topic. But the abnormal perceptivity and responsiveness which underlie his dramatic work, and the unique facility of rhythmic utterance evidenced by his two long poems, made the sonnet for him an instrument as apt as to others it was recalcitrant. He never essayed the true Petrarchan form, which is the richest; but he has given us a far larger number of really mellifluous sonnets than any other man contrived to compass. It is far from certain that all, even of the most serious of his, are any more truly personal than those of the average sonnet-monger. One of the gravest,

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Two loves I have of comfort and despair,  
is an obvious imitation of one of Drayton's ; unless, indeed, Drayton had read Shakespeare's in manuscript and copied that. Seeing that the 146th rather obviously echoes that of Sidney, beginning :

Leave me, O Love, which reaches but to dust,  
the presumption here is against Shakespeare ; and there are further reasons for doubting the personal character of many sonnets in the series. Though, like others of his day, he may have described himself as old when in his thirties (Nos. 63 and 73), it is hard to believe that in that (No. 62) in which are the lines :

But when my glass shows me myself indeed,  
Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,

he is not writing on behalf of a much older man, as Drayton avows he once did for a young one. In No. 138 we have merely :

My days are past the best.

If one sonnet be impersonal, many others may be. One closing couplet is duplicated (Nos. 36 and 96) ; and images are often repeated (*e.g.* Nos. 2 and 60). When we learn that the stepfather of the Earl of Southampton was a "Mr. W. H.," we seem to see a way out of the puzzle set up by the famous dedication of the printer. But whatever may be

the difficulty of counting it all personal, it is no less difficult to doubt that in the sonnets which tell of

Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
and of having

gone here and there  
And made myself a motley to the view,

the poet is penning his own confession. We can but say that, whatever the inspiration, he is the most musical of all the sonneteers. Sometimes trivial, sometimes mawkish, he can hardly escape being tuneful. None else can ring the golden or the silver bells of song as he does in such lines as these :

That thou among the wastes of time must go . . .

And stretchèd metre of an antique song . . .

With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare  
That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems . . .

But that wild music burthens every bough . . .

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,  
Can yet the lease of my true love control,  
Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.  
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured  
And the sad augurs mock their own presage. . . .

And beauty making beautiful old rhyme.

He is inevitably rhythmical, spontaneously lyrical ; and only Sidney and Drayton at their best can compare with him in force of feeling.

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Sir John Davies, the foe of the sonneteers, switched poetry off upon very different lines from theirs; showing, however, more of originality and intellectual power than of poetic inspiration. In 1596 appeared his *Orchestra; or, A Poem of Dauncing*, a thing “judicially” planned and penned, as the title-page claimed, and withal picked out with many a good line. Two in particular—

For his [the Sea's] great crystal eye is always cast  
Up to the Moon, and on her fixèd fast—

caught the wandering glance of Coleridge,  
who turned them into

His great bright eye most silently  
Up to the Moon is cast.

Davies continued the figure musically enough :

And as she daunceth in her pallid sphere  
So daunceth he about his Center here ;

and he at times makes a single line really sing  
for us, as these :

Or as a brook through pebbles wandering . . .  
Love in the twinkling of your eyelids daunceth.

But Davies is a jurist, a reasoner, an Elizabethan “wit”; and he thinks it a happy stroke to give us this :

Behold the *World*, how it is *whirled round*,  
And for it is so *whirl'd*, is namèd so !

Had the *Gulling Sonnets* been printed in that day, instead of being left in manuscript for moderns to publish, the sonneteers must surely have taken their revenge on their assailant; as, indeed, they ought to have done over his egregious series of twenty-six acrostic *Hymns to Astræa* (1599), every one in three stanzas of five, five, and six lines, and all the lines beginning with the letters ELISA BETHA REGINA. It is the last word in Elizabethan "foppery." And yet this strenuous trifler—who was indeed a man of great force of character, which he exhibited in responsible posts after a violent youth-time—produced the most elaborately intellectual poem of that age, the *Nosce Teipsum* ("Know Thyself"), wherein that "Oracle" is "expounded in two elegies, 1. Of human knowledge; 2. Of the Soul of Man and the immortality thereof" (1599). The poem was written during a year of disgrace, fully earned by an act of ruffianly violence in the dining-hall of the Middle Temple; but no man could infer from the verse that its author was lacking in self-control. A whole series of critics have avowed themselves divided between the two impressions set up by Davies's ratiocinative aim and procedure, so hard to endue with poetic charm, and the real skill and distinction of his versification. It is difficult by any standard—impossible by those of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth cen-



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turies—to deny the title of poetry to these stanzas :

What is this knowledge but the sky-stoln fire  
For which the thief still chain'd in ice doth sit ?  
And which the poor rude Satyr would admire,  
And needs would kiss, but burnt his lips with it.

We that acquaint ourselves with every zone,  
And pass both tropics, and behold the poles,  
When we come home, are to ourselves unknown,  
And unacquainted still with our own souls.

I know my soul hath power to know all things,  
Yet is she blind and ignorant in all ;  
I know I am one of Nature's little kings,  
Yet to the last and vilest things am thrall.

It is only the sustained and persistent disputation that forces us out of the poetic mood set up again and again in both parts of the book by grave music of this kind. Didacticism is well-nigh everywhere in Elizabethan poetry ; but Davies carries didacticism to the plane of dialectic, where poetry, in essence "simple, passionate, sensuous," cannot ply her wings. And yet this curiously argumentative and propagandist poem, with its pertinacious special pleading, may be found more readable by some lovers of poetry in our day than many coeval performances that profess loyalty to the artistic first principles which it defies, inasmuch as they so often fall from grace in the pursuit of poetic purpose, while this so often rises to charm

in the course of a planned dissertation. There is reason to think, anyway, that Shakespeare read it with some attention (he uses its phrase "spirit of sense"); and we may do as much.

More assured, however, of the attention of poetry-craving readers are the muses of the two more famous poets who flourished in and out-lived the Elizabethan age, Drayton and Daniel, although both wrote long quasi-historical poems which from the point of view of posterity made the cardinal mistake of setting poetry to do non-poetical work. It was not quite unjustly said of Daniel by Drayton in old age that his poetic manner "better fitted prose"; but the puzzle is to know wherein Drayton thought his own average manner was any better. Thomas Lodge, himself an accomplished writer in many forms, spoke of "Daniel, choice in word and invention; Drayton, diligent and formal." In any case, Daniel's poetic manner was his best. The prose of his *Collection of the History of England* is in the main flat; while the diction of his rhymed *Civil Wars* is often stately enough to make the phrase "well-languaged Daniel," applied to him by William Browne, thoroughly applicable. His line on the Thames—

Glides on with pomp of waters unwithstood—  
recommended itself to Wordsworth and Cole-

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ridge, of whom the latter pronounced his verse  
“ a model of the middle style ” ; and he has  
many such well-sounding lines. But he is at  
his best in gravely impassioned argument, of  
which his finest example is the *Musophilus* ;  
or, *A General Defence of Learning* (1599), a  
not very promising title of a philosophic  
poem. It is in this vein that he comes nearest  
to the passion which engenders poetry :

For Emulation, that proud nurse of Wit,  
Scorning to stay below or come behind,  
Labours upon that narrow top to sit  
Of sole perfection in the highest kind.

II, 259-62.

This is the thing that I was born to do :  
This is my Scene, this part I must fulfil.

II, 577-8.

Men find that action is another thing  
Than what they in discoursing papers read :  
The world's affairs require in managing  
More Arts than those wherein you clerks proceed :  
Whilst timorous knowledge stands considering,  
Audacious Ignorance hath done the deed ;  
For who knows most, the more he knows to doubt :  
The least discourse is commonly most stout.

II, 486-93.

At times the poetic plane is really reached :

Who can tell for what great work in hand  
The greatness of our style is now ordained ?  
What powers it shall bring in, what spirits com-  
mand . . .

It is well approv'd  
The speech of heaven with whom they have com-  
mère

That only seem out of themselves remov'd  
 And do with more than human skills converse :  
 Those numbers wherewith heav'n and earth are mov'd  
 Show, weakness speaks in Prose, but Power in Verse.  
 II, 963-80.

In some of his didactic epistles, as in that  
*To the Countess of Bedford*, he again reaches  
 high levels :

Since all the good we have rests in the mind,  
 By whose proportions only we redeem  
 Our thoughts from out confusion, and do find  
 The measure of ourselves and of our powers,  
 And that all happiness remains confined  
 Within the kingdom of this breast of ours.  
 II, 50-5.

Best of all perhaps is the often-quoted  
 couplet (a saying of Seneca's) :

And that unless above himself he can  
 Erect himself, how poor a thing is man.  
*To the Countess of Cumberland*, II, 98-99.

Not unnaturally did Wordsworth find a  
 kindred spirit in the writer of these lines, who  
 anticipates him in many matters, though not  
 in his worship of Nature, which was not  
 an Elizabethan cult. Jonson ought to have  
 admired Daniel, but did not.

Drayton, in his partly different way, is no  
 more if no less memorable. He had more of  
 sheer poetic fire : none of Daniel's sonnets  
 will compare with his best ; and his *Ballad of*  
*Agincourt* is quite out of his brother poet's

reach ; but he, too, produced a mass of historiographic verse in which inspiration is as it were only strenuously climbed to, Pegasus not being available. In his early *Harmony of the Church* (1591), the height is not at all attained ; and it remains something of a mystery that that tame performance should have been ecclesiastically prosecuted. But in his *Ode to Elizabeth* (1593) there is a real lyric flight, and a flash of transfiguring charm :

Make her a goodly chapilet of azur'd columbine,  
And wreathe about her coronet with sweetest eglandine ;

Bedeck our Beta all with lilies,  
And the dainty daffadillies,  
With roses damask, white and red, and fairest flower-de-lys,  
*With cowslips of Jerusalem, and cloves of Paradise.*

He was a warm admirer of both Spenser and Sidney : indeed, he is cordial in his praise of many contemporaries, including Shakespeare. Spenser, in turn, probably meant for him the praise given to "Action" in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. But he is singularly unequal in his execution. It has been said of him, with guarded enthusiasm, that in his work "poetry is never far off" ; and this may be hesitatingly allowed, with the suggestion that *The Barons' Wars* and *Polyolbion* had better not be grappled with by the ingenuous reader till he has otherwise realized that Drayton is really a poet. His con-

temporaries called him "golden-mouthed" as they called Daniel well-languaged; and they pair well, though Drayton's richer epithet is scarcely judicial. The truth is that his occasional prose has rather more distinction than the bulk of his abundant yet laboured verse. When in 1603 he transposed his *Mortimeriados* into *The Barons' Wars*, altering the stanza of seven lines into one of eight, he affixed an explanatory preface that has fascinated every modern reader with its justification of the technical change:

This [stanza] of eight both holds the tune clean thorow to the Base of the Column (which is the couplet, the foot or bottom) and closeth not but with a full satisfaction to the ear for so long detention.

Briefly, this sort of stanza hath in it Majesty, Perfection, and Solidity, resembling the pillar which in Architecture is called the Tuscan, whose Shaft is of six Diameters, and Bases of two. The other reasons this place will not bear; but generally, all Stanzas are in my opinion but Tyrants and Torturers, when they make invention obey their number, which sometime would otherwise but scantle itself. A fault that great Masters in this Art strive to avoid.

The reader of *The Barons' Wars* is tempted to give a respectful assent to the indictment of all stanzas, without acquiescing in the prior claim for that of eight lines. Drayton often rises high above the æsthetic levels of the *Mirroure for Magistrates*; but also terribly often adheres to them.

In his own day he seems to have been famed

for the *Idea* sonnets, which aim in general more successfully at force than at beauty, and his *England's Heroical Epistles* (1597), which were many times reprinted. It would seem that their form—the heroic couplet—had much to do with their acceptance. It undeniably gives them a certain declamatory and epigrammatic vigour, which makes the Epistle of Rosamond to Henry sound more incisively than Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*; and the taste for this was to become the ruling standard in England for many generations. But while we may fairly liken Drayton to Dryden for power in this kind, we are not thereby withheld from confessing that, though there will always be readers who prefer rhetoric to poetry, his most popular work stands rather for a surrender than a capture of the great guerdon sought for in the best hours of Elizabethan song.

The most inspired poem of his Elizabethan time is the *Endimion and Phœbe* (1595), which he not only did not reprint but abandoned, turning much of it later (1606) into the unreadable satirical piece called *The Man in the Moon*, as if he repented of the original. Inspired probably less by *Venus and Adonis* than by Marlowe's posthumous *Hero and Leander*, which had been circulated in manuscript before being printed, the *Endimion* belongs to the springtime of his genius; and has more of vital power, though much less of

sustained fluency, than Shakespeare's facile and popular poem. It is an open question whether it was jettisoned because of misgiving about its theme or of disinclination to remain in competition with a piece which had eclipsed it in vogue. Perhaps both surmises may stand. Drayton's sense of perfection was uneasy rather than sure: he left weak lines in his famous *Ballad* even after long revision; and the *Battle of Agincourt* into which he inflated it is heavily laboured and ill-inspired. But he always had in him, in his own words of generous praise of the compeers of his youth, "brave translunary things"; and the fashion in which, from his Elizabethan roots, he put forth in later life all manner of poetry in the fashion of another age, is one of the most singular things in literary history.

Marlowe revealed his elemental power less in narrative than in dramatic verse; but there too his force transcends that of nearly all his rivals. Shakespeare of course excelled him in fluidity, but fell below him in vigour, being for once bent only on book-making, whereas Marlowe wrought always with a certain eager ardour, which gives vividness to the first sestiad of his unfinished *Hero and Leander*, and to the second something more; though it must be admitted that Chapman, who continued the poem through four added sestiads, shows on the whole a more abundant vein. In this erotic poem Marlowe is notably



sententious ; and Shakespeare mused on his "saw of might " which comes at the close of a passage not usually quoted in full.

It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
 For will in us is overruled by fate.  
 When two are stript, long ere the course begin,  
 We wish that one would lose, the other win ;  
 And one especially do we affect  
 Of two gold ingots, like in each respect ;  
 The reason no man knows : let it suffice  
 What we behold is censured [=judged] by our eyes.  
 Where both deliberate, the love is slight :  
 Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ?

As if to show that he was no mere amorist, he followed up his version (in every sense loose) of Ovid's *Elegies* with one of the first book of Lucan, of which the concision and force, maintained line for line throughout, are not to be matched among English translations.

That *tour de force* might have been expected to have set up a fashion of narrative or epic blank verse ; but the lead was not taken, save perhaps by Shakespeare and Jonson in the liberation of their rhythms. Like Chapman and Drayton, Jonson was fatally attracted to the heroic couplet for his non-dramatic purposes ; and it is in that pedestrian measure that he pens most of the *Epistles* and *Elegies* which give weight to his *Forest* and his *Underwoods*. What he could do with it at and near his best is to be seen in his noble lines *To the Memory of my beloved Master*

*William Shakespeare*; his glowing *Vision on the Muses* of his friend *Michael Drayton*; and his less exalted epistles *To the Earl of Dorset*, *To a Friend*, to persuade him to the Wars, and *To Master John Selden*. All this is post-Elizabethan; but here, varying between the moral vein, as in the lines:

'Tis by degrees that men arrive at glad  
Profit in aught: each day some little add,  
In time 'twill be a heap: this is not true  
Alone in money, but in manners too,

and the higher flight of his enthusiastic panegyrics, he sets the Elizabethan stamp upon a mode of verse which was to be the normal form of poetry in England for two hundred years.

Truly Elizabethan, too, was Chapman in some respects; yet he might almost be called the spiritual father of the "metaphysical" school of the next age. He enters the scene in 1594, with his *Shadow of Night*, made up of a *Hymnus in Noctem* and a *Hymnus in Cynthia*. Anything further removed from the still unfinished *Faerie Queene* it would be hard to plan. In technique Chapman is at once novel, obscure, and wantonly archaic. He flaunts the old offence of gratuitously altering accent to make a rhyme:

Who running far, at length each pours her *heart*  
Into the bosom of the gulfy *desart*.

And eagle-like dost with thy starry *wings*  
Beat in the fowls and beasts to Somnus' lodgings.

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The archaistic school—Spenser and Peele in particular—had done this kind of thing apparently as part of their archaism ; and the song-makers copied the old usage naturally : Chapman combines it with the most reckless neology, in a superfœtation of thought and imagery that often defies construing. The effect of this, as of much of his later verse, including the dramatic, can best be likened to that of a volcano erupting in darkness, with an immensity of occult energy and an occasional lurid flash of light, but with small ministry of joy or beauty. If Shakespeare as a dramatist was “for all time,” Chapman as an original poet was for none. His unparalleled obscurity is that of convulsive thought which never clears itself save in isolated passages : for stately Elizabethan commonplace he commonly substitutes a cryptic discourse which suggests profundity chiefly by being unintelligible. When a clear couplet comes, it is fine in the Elizabethan way :

No pen can anything eternal write  
That is not steeped in humour of the night.

But he will without scruple trip up a fluent  
sequence for an archaistic rhyme :

Time's motion being like the reeling sun's,  
Or as the sea reciprocally runs,  
Hath brought us now to their opinions  
As in our garment ancient fashions

Are newly worn ; and as sweet poesy  
 Will not be clad in her supremacy  
 With those strange garments (Rome's hexameters)  
 As she is English ; but in right prefers  
 Our native robes (put on with skilful *hands*,  
 English heroics) to those antic *garlands*.

The classic measure, dating from Chaucer, is wilfully flawed with an archaic disfigurement far more disturbing than any pedantic classicism. Yet when we turn to his stanza-work in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* (1595), we feel he might do anything in technique if he would. It was a period of erotic poems, competing with sonnets ; and Chapman can be as erotic as any ; but he has no need of such material to be poetic :

O Beauty, how attractive is thy power !  
 For as the life's heat clings about the heart,  
 So all men's hungry eyes do haunt thy bower.  
 Reigning in Greece, Troy swam to thee in art ;  
 Removed to Troy, Greece followed thee in fears.  
 Thou drew'st each sireless sword each childless dart  
 And pull'dst the towers of Troy about thine ears ;  
 Shall I then muse that thus thou drawest me ?  
 No, but admire, I stand thus far from thee.

But he was to devote himself in the main to the " English heroics " of his early praise, and to win his fullest meed of fame by raising to a new power and splendour the old vernacular verse of fourteen syllables. His couplets, far as they are from the calm lucidity of the Augustan age, sound the very note of

its decadent style in the phrase "enamelled meads": his English "fourteeners" were uncopied and inimitable.

A translation of Homer had been attempted by several hands before 1580: one by Byneman, giving ten Books, being entered for publication in that year; and one of ten Books, *made from the French*, by Arthur Hall, being published in the following year. Drant, the translator of two books of Horace's *Satires* (1566), had translated four Books of Homer, but did not publish his work. Hall's version, which no modern critic or historian appears to have seen, passed out of sight as a complete failure. Chapman thus had a free field; and he took possession so powerfully that not till Pope did any one try to compete. The otherwise insoluble problem of translating the *Iliad* he solved by turning it into a "Homeristic" poem in the old native measure, never before so ennobled, attaining with it a kind of effect quite new in English poetry, but so telling in its kind, in virtue of his own poetic power and variety of rhythm, that his is to this day the most readable of all the English translations. He does not come off very well in the loveliest passages, as that at the end of the eighth Book, where he loses the supreme simplicity of Homer in rhyme-seeking; but he keeps up in general a sounding and sweeping and changing rhythm that in its own kind is admirable. As here:

Thus charged he her with haste, that did before with  
     haste abound,  
 Who cast herself from all the heights with which steep  
     heaven is crown'd,  
 And as Jove, brandishing a star, which men a comet  
     call,  
 Hurls out his curlèd hair abroad, that from his brand  
     exhale  
 A thousand sparks to fleets at sea and every mighty  
     host,  
 Of all presages and ill-haps a sign mistrusted most ;  
 So Pallas fell twixt both the camps, and suddenly was  
     lost ;  
 When through the breasts of all that saw, she strook  
     a strong amaze  
 With viewing in her whole descent her bright and  
     ominous blaze.

He alters his original as often as he sees fit. "Which is all paraphrastical in my translation," he curtly remarks at the end of one footnote. In the "Commentarius" at the ends of some of the Books the Elizabethan poet lets himself loose. Jonson himself is not so pugnacious ; though a common wrath at the impertinence of popular and other criticism was for him and Chapman a bond of amity. Chapman is always striving and crying aloud. In his explosive prefaces he seems to quiver with fury at an antagonism which has not yet had the chance to express itself, but which he fiercely anticipates. "We have example sacred enough," he shouts, "that true Poesy's humility, poverty and contempt, are badges of divinity, not vanity.

Bray then, and bark against it, ye wolf-faced worldlings . . . I for my part shall ever esteem it much more manly and sacred, in this harmless and pious study, to sit till I sink into my grave, than shine in your vain-glorious bubbles and impieties; all your poor policies, wisdoms, and their trappings, at no more valuing than a musty nut." He did protest too much. It has been suggested that it was he to whom Shakespeare alluded in the 86th Sonnet as being, with "the full proud sail of his great verse, bound for the prize" of his patron. On that view the greater poet was the humbler—if indeed he was serious.

In Chapman's version of the *Odyssey*, which appeared in the year of Shakespeare's death, the "full proud sail" is furled. The heroic couplet has taken the place of the fourteener, and the result is substantial failure.

Another dramatist of the earlier flight, Thomas Lodge, shows in the poetry freely scattered through his prose romances *Rosalynde* and *A Margarite of America* a fertility of metrical form and ease of scansion that might have resulted in some memorable poetry if only Lodge had had something vital to sing. Some of his lines are good enough for anybody, for instance :

See where the babes of memory are laid  
Under the shadow of Apollo's tree.

*In Commendation of a Solitary Life.*

But though he produced in *The Complaint*

of *Elstred* (1593) a composition in the taste of the *Mirroir for Magistrates* and of Daniel and Drayton ; and in *Glaucus and Silla* (1589) an elaborate erotic poem, which seems to have suggested Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*—besides satires, sonnets, odes, and epistles—he does not attain to the category of the masters in any one form ; and has indeed never been made accessible to the ordinary reader even to the extent to which Daniel and Drayton have. It is but fair to say of him that while in his longer and shorter pieces alike he often lays under contribution the French and Italian verse of his day, he not seldom improves upon it to the extent of yielding us a very spontaneous-seeming and tuneful English poem in place of a rather stiff French one ; and if his verse were but collected in the ordinary way he might still find a considerable audience. As it is, he seems likely to be best remembered by the single madrigal :

Love in my bosom like a bee  
Doth suck his sweet.

And indeed it is by such felicities as that that Elizabethan literature still chiefly appeals to many readers. The song-books of the time, and the songs scattered through the plays, are felt to keep with them an old-world fragrance which no other age has recaptured. As with the sonnets, it is a case of over-pro-



duction, with but a percentage of perfection ; yet the gems suffice to give lustre to the whole. Taking Elizabethan together with Stuart drama, we are bound to say that the lyric note is best maintained by the playwrights, whose dramatic discipline quickened their pulses, and by the story-tellers, who seem to have felt the need of heightening by song the effects of their over-voluble prose. Apart from a few fine things by Wyatt and Surrey, the art of delicate lyric begins in England in that age ; and Lilly among the dramatists should have the credit of showing the way, though he was soon surpassed. Shakespeare's " Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings " is distilled from a line of his. Greene, who put no serious songs in his plays, lit up his tales with many, some of them wholly charming, as the favourite lullaby,

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee.

Nashe, who was too essentially a master of prose to be quite a poet, has one line in a song in *Summer's Last Will* :

Go not yet hence, bright soul of the sad year,  
which strangely well fulfils the sense of " the lyrical cry." Even Peele can warble ; and the detached " sonnet,"

His golden locks time hath to silver turned,  
keeps for him a safe place in the Elizabethan

bead-roll. And though Shakespeare here, as in sonnet and drama, has done the finest things, and is to be crowned for the perfect loveliness of

Take, oh take those lips away,

while Fletcher is probably to be credited with the incongruous second stanza (in which the woman's voice turns to a man's) :

Hide, oh hide those hills of snow,

it must be granted that Fletcher's fertility and felicity in lyric place him quite in the front rank. *The Faithful Shepherdess* is as rich in song as it is poor in drama ; and he has so many good things elsewhere that it remains possible to doubt whether he or Shakespeare wrote

Roses, their sharp spines being gone

in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* ; though the line " With harebells dim " seems to have the very signature of him among whose best-loved flowers were " violets dim."

Beaumont has one signal success :

Shake off your heavy trance  
And leap into a dance  
Such as no mortal used to tread :  
Fit only for Apollo  
To play to, and the moon to lead,  
And all the stars to follow !

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And Dekker and Heywood have their prominent place in the choir, the former with his

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers,  
in *Patient Grissel*, and the songs in the *Shoemaker's Holiday* and *Old Fortunatus*; the latter with his

Ye little birds that sit and sing  
in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, and the delightful

Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day!

in his *Rape of Lucrece*. Anthony Munday, who in drama has left but a reputation for unambitious handiwork, would seem to have achieved the limpid rustic song on the dead Robin Hood in his and Chettle's play of 1601. Rare Ben Jonson, it is true, hardly ever strikes the desirable note in his plays; but he has left us that enduring song, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," so wonderfully compounded from dead bones of pedantry.

Of the professed song-writers, the most memorable is Thomas Campion, Doctor of Physic, if we credit him with the whole of the verse in the first *Book of Aires* (1601) by him and his friend Philip Rosseter. Ostensibly, each contributed twenty-one lyrics, and Rosseter the whole of the airs; but the critics are more or less confident in ascribing to Campion all of the verse, and half of the music.

It is noteworthy that some of the best poems, such as,

And would you see my mistress' face ?

are in the second section, ascribed to Rosseter ; but there is a similarity in the work which goes to support the view that he meant to claim merely the tunes. A certain insecurity of rhythm pervades both sections, as if the creation of the poems *with* the music made the author partly inattentive to the laws of verbal metre. Indeed, this composer of songs with words professed only to write, "after the fashion of the times, ear-pleasing rhymes, without art," and only once, in a set of sapphics, to copy the ancients who "tied themselves strictly to the number and value of their syllables" ; and yet the sapphics, as a matter of fact, are far from being strict. In the following year Campion published *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, "wherein it is demonstratively proved, and by example confirmed, that the English tongue will receive eight several kinds of numbers, proper to itself, which are all in this book set forth, *and were never before this time by any man attempted.*" The book is dedicated to the Lord High Treasurer, Lord Buckhurst, to whom the author explains that

Poesy in all kind of speaking is the chief beginner and maintainer of eloquence, not only helping the ear with the acquaintance of sweet numbers, but also

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raising the mind in a more high and lofty conceit. For this end have I studied to induce a true form of versifying into our language: for the vulgar and unartificial [=unskilful] custom of riming hath, I know, deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English poesy.

It is a comfort to find that poetry is for once not to be extolled as a moral function; but no theorist ever more completely failed to make good his professed purpose than did Campion. His eight forms of verse "proper to" English are but mechanical performances in classical metres, with the marked exception of the first example, which, described as "licentiate iambics," is simply the now established English blank verse, written with a due admixture of iambs and trochees, with an occasional dactyl. Other examples are in what Campion calls "our iambic dimetre, or English march," which runs:

Raving war, begot  
In the thirsty sands  
Of the Libyan Isles;

and the rest are in more or less "strict" trochaics, elegiacs, sapphics, and "a kind of Anacreontic verse." The mystery is, how the poet came to suppose that he was the first to produce his so-called "licentiate iambics." Apparently he had seen no blank-verse plays, and knew not of Surrey's version of Virgil. In point of fact he writes a fair but stiff "end-stopped" blank verse, which at that very

time was being triumphantly superseded in the theatres.

The book, naturally, had not the slightest effect on anybody's practice, the author himself tranquilly disregarding afterwards his own precepts. It is indeed far from certain that he had ever felt any serious concern for them. He was a cultured eccentric, a lean physician, who professed to envy the fat ; and a man capable of that make-believe would not stick at trifles in theory-mongering. Clever, neatly written, and essentially wrong-headed, the essay was duly and politely confuted by Samuel Daniel in an *Apologie for Ryme* in the same year ; and Campion, living on till 1620, produced several more " Books of Airs " in which he presents a multitude of lyrics all in rhyme, which he handles with an increasing competence ; also several masques ; and never an unrhymed poem of any description. He died, it would seem, of the plague, and left " all he had unto Mr. Philip Rosseter, and wished that his estate had been far more." It amounted to £22.

Campion has not left us one really great song ; and he made many that lack distinction. But he maintains a level of independent poetic feeling and graceful execution that entitles him to be remembered as an estimable and accomplished Elizabethan, one of the many literary and scholarly physicians of that time. With his skill and originality in music

and his scholarly interest in poetic experiment, he is indeed one of the ornaments of an age in which the love and practice of the arts of song were too general to be called dilettantism ; and which thus still gives out for us, as it were, a far-away sound of viols and flutes.

And that is a pleasanter thing to be remembered by than the efforts at satire which mark the last decade of the sixteenth century. There is some dispute as to whether Joseph Hall or John Marston be—as each claimed for himself—the first satirist proper in the field of English poetry. In point of fact both Wyatt and Surrey had attempted that literary exercise, to say nothing of Skelton and Roye, the assailants of Cardinal Wolsey ; Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*, which must be assigned to that order, is also prior ; and even Lodge's *Fig for Momus* anticipates the rival claimants. For that matter, Spenser's *Mother Hubberd's Tale* dates from 1591, whereas Hall's satires were published in 1597, and Marston's *Scourge of Villainy* in 1598. As between Hall and Marston the "point of precedency," as Doctor Johnson would say, is of no great importance. Hall, who became a bishop, has three of his devotional sayings standing to his credit in the *Dictionary of Familiar Quotations*, but none from his satires ; and Marston has none at all. The substantial differences between them are that Hall is decent, and Marston otherwise ; and that the latter by dint of

raucous violence makes the more powerful and unpleasant impression. But neither can maintain the epigrammatic force and finish which alone can make satirical verse memorable; and Marston's violence, which always sets up the suggestion of a vulgar moralist pelting his victims with high-smelling missiles, arouses dislike rather than amusement. Satire as distinguished from abuse was not really an Elizabethan accomplishment; it was to be cultivated in an age with fewer illusions, less genius, and less poetry.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE enters the dramatic lists, obscurely enough, some short time before the death of Greene. We cannot say exactly in what year he came to London from his native Stratford-on-Avon; but the presumption is that it was about 1588, and that he had already become an actor in the company originally attached to the Earl of Leicester, which on that nobleman's death was taken over by Lord Strange, and later, after reconstruction, became known as the Lord Chamberlain's men. A simple actor the youth must have been for several years, and there is no evidence that he was ever reckoned a great one—a matter in which he is on a par with Ben



Jonson and other playwrights of the time who occasionally acted. There is, in fact, no case on record of a great actor who was also a great writer ; and men have accordingly been apt to undervalue Shakespeare's training on the boards as a factor in his dramatic preparation.

It was probably, however, of capital importance in his artistic evolution. All forms of art and science can ultimately be seen to be perfected by way of an intensifying of thought and feeling, in which the data are re-felt and re-considered. The deepening may come through simple iteration of the processes by a faculty that ripens with time—the evolution of the individual ; or by the advent of new faculty, which sees and sensates freshly—the evolution of the race. But genius is always conditioned, and Shakespeare in Sidney's place would not have been the Shakespeare we possess. Marlowe could not as an experienced actor have produced the drama with which he began ; he would have seen such matter to be poetic recitation rather than the expression of character in action. Shakespeare, with his unique powers in course of growth, had to undergo the provocation of having to declaim and hearing declaimed the verse of poets who were outside rather than inside their subject : whatever his mimetic gift, he must have wanted to improve on that : the less the mimetic faculty, perhaps, the more would it crave naturalness of phrase

and of character-type, even in the poetic form. Molière's is a parallel case. The course of artistic advance in the case of Kyd, Greene, and Marlowe, had been by transition from remote to near types of personage—from Tamburlaine and Orlando, the unknown life of the past or of a wholly imaginary Spain, to modern and near forms—Arden, Alice, Faustus, Dorothea, English kings and English nobles. Thus alone could imagination for them be vitalized. Shakespeare, with his higher faculty, made yet another step towards reality. For him realization was at once objective and subjective: the more real character-types had to pass the crucible of the actor—himself in this case the greatest poet of all.

His preparation was all the better for being non-academic: he had no august conventions to outgrow. He appears to have had an ordinary Elizabethan grammar-school education, and thereafter to have helped in the somewhat miscellaneous business of his father, John Shakespeare, who acted as tanner, glover, and butcher for the village. It is not yet certain whether the father's later record of fines and disabilities stood for mismanagement in business, or for recusancy to ecclesiastical administration, which was aggressively hostile to nonconformity. All that seems clear is that John Shakespeare passed from a period of local success, during

which he was for a time bailiff of the town, to one of relative depression and anxiety; and that the young William, making an early and hasty marriage, found it difficult to maintain his wife and three children, and accordingly went on the stage. It is obviously likely that, with his faculties, he had taken an especial interest in the travelling companies who visited Stratford; and that such a recruit would be welcomed by the players, whether on tour or in London, when they had a vacancy. And it seems just as likely that if his father's and his own affairs had gone smoothly at Stratford he might never have figured as a poet or dramatist at all.

It is in 1592, in Greene's deathbed pamphlet of repentance, reproach, and vituperation, that we have the first trace of Shakespeare as a "Shake-scene," a Johannes Fac-totum of his company, who could "bombast out a blank-verse" for them with a facility which made him an unwelcome rival to the regular playwrights. That is to say, he was already adapting and recasting other men's work, and probably collaborating either with outsiders or with some of the playwrights who presumed to write for a stage that was supplied by "university wits" with its principal pieces. But Shakespeare's own express avowal, in the dedication of his poem on *Venus and Adonis* (1593), that that poem is the "first heir of his invention," precludes us

from believing that before that date he had composed an entire play of his own. That declaration we cannot rationally refuse to accept; and only in the light of it can we understand the nature of his early work.

In almost all of the plays presumably produced before 1595 we actually find, as it happens, evidences of variety of composition. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, supposed to be his first comedy, there is a quantity of matter which points to outside collaboration, and might conceivably have been furnished by the young actor's patron, Lord Southampton, and his friends. The phrase "Priscian, a little scratched," as a comment on false Latin, would have come strangely from a youth who had left school about fourteen or fifteen, and who had, by the testimony of Jönson, "small Latin and less Greek." In the early *Comedy of Errors* we observe marked differences of versification in the first act, the opening scene being written in mechanically regular "end-stopped" verse, with exactly ten syllables, save in three instances; while in the second we have "double" or "feminine" endings, that is, extra syllables, in 25 out of 103 lines. In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, also an early play, the father of Proteus appears in the first act, and never again; and Proteus is sent with others "to salute the emperor," who is not again heard of. Apparently there has been reconstruc-

tion, perhaps a combination of two plots. As the play stands, it is visibly curtailed in the *dénouement*, where, further, a transcriber's or a printer's error has put into the mouth of Valentine two impossible lines, belonging to another character. On the theme of *Romeo and Juliet*, yet again, we know there was a play before 1560; and this, there is reason to think, was built upon by Shakespeare, probably through an intermediary adaptation. As the play stands, independent critics have been impressed by the presence of different styles, though no one doubts that the really fine work is Shakespeare's.

There is now little doubt, further, though there is not unanimity, concerning the non-Shakespearean character of the first part of *Henry VI*, and the presence of much of other men's work in the second and third parts, which are obviously adaptations from two earlier plays, still extant. Similarly, the *Taming of the Shrew*, which was preceded by a *Taming of a Shrew*, is itself in the main pre-Shakespearean, the master-hand being doubtfully traceable only—if at all—in the Katherine and Petruchio scenes, which are at most worked over by him.

Such being the young playwright's practice at his outset, we are warned to surmise that in the later plays, in which he more or less completely gives us his own work, he is still, as a rule or often, rewriting old plots. His Fal-

staff we know to have been superimposed on a previous figure which, to the expressed discontent of the descendants, was named after the famous Lollard Sir Thomas Oldcastle ; and the whole double play of *Henry IV* is presumptively a recast. It is hardly possible that Shakespeare originally planned the ill-conceived and jarring scene of Prince Henry's donning of the crown, or, indeed, the loose movement of the whole, though his hand has everywhere been laid on the verse and on the prose comedy. But even the latter was wrought piecemeal ; Mrs. Quickly being a wife in the first part and a widow of long standing in the second, though there has been no break in the continuity of the action, and no mention of the hostess's change of status. *King John*, in turn, is a rewriting of *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, which, in the main, was probably the work of Lodge. There is a presumption that even *Richard II* is a recast of an older play, perhaps written by Peele, of whom there are traces in the diction ; and there are various reasons for thinking that *Julius Cæsar*, in which the style is so often suggestive of other hands, is a reconstruction by Shakespeare of a previous play which may have been in two parts—possibly that which we know to have been written for Henslowe in 1602 by Dekker, Drayton, Munday, Webster, and Middleton.

In the case of *Hamlet* we know beyond

reasonable doubt that there was a previous play by Thomas Kyd, written at least as early as 1588 ; and of this earlier work there are some apparent traces in the pirated First Quarto of 1602. Again, with regard to the *Merchant of Venice*, we know from Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* that as early as 1579 there was on the stage a play containing something like the casket scene, and based on the Shylock motive. *King Lear*, in turn, we know to be a complete recomposition on the main motive of an older *King Leir and his Three Daughters* ; and it is probable that both *Othello* and *Macbeth* were similarly suggested by previous dramas. Not till *Coriolanus* (1608) do we certainly have a tragedy primarily composed by Shakespeare from mere book-material, as *As You Like It* had been framed upon Lodge's prose story of *Rosalynde*. *Measure for Measure* (1604), we know, builds upon the *Promos and Cassandra* of Whetstone, with probably another play between ; and the chances are that *The Two Gentlemen*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *All's Well that Ends Well*, were founded upon previous plays by Greene. It is here that the challenge of Greene's champion in 1594 becomes pressing. These are the plays in our Shakespeare which are most likely to have been of Greene's planning as regards their plots ; and if we disregard the challenge in respect of them, on the score that we have no

direct evidence on the subject, we in effect ignore it altogether as regards Shakespeare, the only playwright to whom it appears to point at all clearly. There are really strong grounds for regarding these plays as adaptations, however superior may be the execution to the common run of Greene's. The most carefully finished of all the comedies, *Twelfth Night*, is the most homogeneous in style and matter; but we cannot say that its plot-motives were of Shakespeare's framing. The motive of a brother and a sister masquerading in male clothes, and that of the disguised girl serving as page to the man she loves—already used in the *Two Gentlemen*—were standing conventions in continental fiction, and must have been long familiar on the stage.

There is still a natural reluctance to face the fact of all this indebtedness on the part of the supreme dramatist to a number of his predecessors for both themes and character-types. But the recognition of the debt really puts in a clearer light the greatness of the faculty which so marvellously transmuted common clay into so much of fine gold; and it reduces to intelligibility at the same time the otherwise occult process of the production of such a mass of fine and great work in a few years by an actor of no great culture, and presumably without the leisure for such a variety of reading and knowledge as would be required for the initiation of such a multi-



tude of plots. To know Shakespeare, we must think of him as the actor-partner catering for his company, concerned primarily to find themes and frame plots that will "draw," and driven alike by his genius and by his experience as an actor to make the characters lifelike. To the poetic declamation which the age and the blank-verse form demanded, he was trained by his years of work on the boards; and in that form he rapidly developed a mastery of rhythm that left all his contemporaries behind. But he is no less their superior in sheer play-making. Alike in poetry, in perception of character, and in the eye for dramatic effect, he soon far excelled them all; though he learned not a little from others even to the end. The opening scene in the second part of *Henry IV*, in which the fears of Northumberland are alternately laid and stirred, till the crushing truth is reached, makes a kind of psychic effect at which previous Tudor dramatists had never even aimed; and the character-drawing in the part of Shallow, done for its own sake, is no less an innovation by the new master. Lacking as he did the university culture which in some degree had been enjoyed by most of them, he rather gained than lost thereby, being thrown for his training upon his own powers and the living models with which he was supplied, whereas they had been biased by their schooling, and were untrained to

meet the real needs of the stage. But in sheer power of reflection alike upon art and upon life he was also gifted beyond their scope. Always he transcends them in craftsmanship and verisimilitude no less than in force and delicacy. Taking over from Greene or Peele plots which no manipulation could make wholly satisfactory, he still produces something more coherent as well as more delightful than anything left by either of them; and whereas Greene gave him a real lead in respect of his woman characters in two or three plays, Shakespeare from the first exhibits a relative mastery in that kind, even in working over other men's draughts. The girls in the *Two Gentlemen* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the women in the *Comedy of Errors*, are in their comparatively slight way drawn with an original sureness of touch; and soon, in Juliet and Beatrice and Portia, he has far surpassed his predecessor.

His full superiority can best be realized by studying first a great play in which he was hampered by his raw material, and next one in which he put the model aside and took only the theme, working it out for himself. In *Hamlet*, the most famous of his plays, he was certainly hampered by the previous tragedy of Kyd, which he recast. In that, the assumed madness of the hero, remotely derived from an old saga, was matter for mirth, as madness always was to the rude and crude Eliza-

bethan audience ; and the added madness of Ophelia would serve the same purpose. The first he turns to truly tragic ends, and the second he makes matter of pity and tears, even as he had subtly touched with new sympathy his presentment of the contemned and vindictive Jew in the *Merchant of Venice*. In point of delicacy and vividness of character delineation, it need hardly be said, *Hamlet* transcends all previous tragedy : the portraiture is as freshly powerful as the versification. Still there remain incongruities involved in the structure of the original. Hamlet's brutal words over the slain Polonius, and his savage motive for sparing the praying King, remain on the old barbaric plane ; and the placing of the "To be" soliloquy, with its reverie on the "undiscovered country," *after* the scenes in which Hamlet has actually met the "returned traveller," tells of readjustment which missed coherence. The barbaric plot discords with the brooding psychology which now pervades it. Perhaps in *Othello*, where again the characterization surpasses in intensity everything done by previous men, the perplexity aroused as to the motives of Iago is similarly to be accounted for by a crude original ; though we cannot be sure that Shakespeare had not known "Italianate" devils of Iago's brand. In any case the plot is likely to be borrowed, even if refined upon : it is on the side of plot struc-

ture that Shakespeare is least original ; and that of *Othello* is impossibly "telescoped" as it stands. It is in the astonishing lifelikeness of the great scenes ; in the new mimetic imagination seen at work in such touches as Emilia's reiterated question " My husband ? " that the player reveals his mastery in his craft.

But in *Lear*, the most overpowering tragedy of the modern world, we see him refusing even to be trammelled by other men's designs. The old *Leir* is quite a tolerable play for its time, the fairly mature work, it may be, of Kyd and Lodge. But Shakespeare about 1605 was in a mood which spurned their mixture of serious comedy and farce. He simply took the legendary motive and put the old play in the waste-paper basket, creating a new tale in which evil and good clash and grapple with an intensity of action and feeling which would have shrivelled up the first framework. Here there are no ambiguities. The poet's vision plays with a terrible lucidity on all the passions of all the characters : the erring Lear is dashed on destruction by his own ungovernable temperament ; the noble Cordelia abets the tragedy by the hereditary obstinacy in which alone she is of kin with her house ; the good pay their penalties even as do the wicked ; and in the frightful comment of Edgar in the fifth act on the penalty of his blinded father we seem to see Shakespeare for once thrown from

the poise of sanity in a flash of fierce scorn of all human folly, his own perhaps included.

In that mood he might well do his part in *Timon*—a play in which he has collaborated with or incompletely revised another man, as he did in *Pericles*. But in *Coriolanus* we see him again bent on taking elbow-room for his own genius, with the result that on the basis of Plutarch he builds another great artistic whole, wherein nearly every character is limned with a masterly power; and the central figure tells with more than Marlowe's force the great tragic truth, "'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus." Framed as it was without any intermediary model, this play serves equally with *Lear* to reveal the dramatic supremacy of Shakespeare. In that, he had discarded the types of the play which suggested his, utterly eclipsing them from the start: in this, turning a classic narrative into drama, he visualizes and vitalizes his personages as no dramatist had ever done before. With perhaps the exception of Tullus Aufidius, whose psychology was probably meant to be illuminated by the temperament of the actor, they stand out like so many studies of actual people, varying in tone and manner even as in character. The two contrasted types of Volumnia and Virgilia, the mother and the wife of Coriolanus, are not to be matched even in Shakespeare's gallery for the swift certainty with which they are con-

ceived and portrayed ; and in the former there is forced upon us with a subtle insistence something that Plutarch did not tell, the part played by the high-spirited and high-minded yet unwise mother in fostering her son's imperious spirit up to the point at which it so masters his life that she is in the end forced to be his destroyer, to save him from himself. Her complete unconsciousness of the nature of her work, alike in the past and in the crowning crisis, is a new conception in the way of criticism of life ; and it is wrought out in wholly dramatic fashion, without a word of comment from the dramatist, who leaves us to read his revelation as we read that of life itself.

In comparison with Volumnia, Virgilia seems at first a supererogatory creation, vividly sketched in for the sheer love of character-drawing. She is powerless to affect the action ; yet she is characterized in the third scene of the first act, with the most perfect clearness, as at once wholly womanly in contrast with her masterful mother-in-law, and still gently determined to go her own way in her own sphere. In reality she is a profoundly conceived foil to the other. The mother dominates and misguides ; the devoted wife, the "gracious silence," lovingly complies and cannot save. Tragedy has here become something deeper than a series of tragic events : it is a whole aspect of life.

It was probably a circumstantial accident that gave us, in addition to those incomparable portraits of women, yet a third, that of Valeria, who, though she briefly figures in Plutarch, has strictly nothing to do with the action of the play save to suggest anew, by her account of the boy Marcius, how even admirable women may miseducate children. (Shakespeare is careful to insist on her nobility and charm by putting a warm eulogium of her in the mouth of Coriolanus ; but he had before introduced her as enjoying the episode of the child rending a butterfly in pieces. The detail may have been suggested to him by Montaigne, who makes earnest comment upon matters of the kind in regard to education.) As all female parts were then played by boys, and there are three women characters on the stage at once, alike in *Lear*, in *Coriolanus*, and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, we know that the company then had three boys available, and that Valeria was thus made a possible character in the Roman play. But the man who drew her and Volumnia and Virgilia was beyond question deeply interested in women as personalities.

*Antony* is probably a little later than *Coriolanus* ; and it completes the testimony to its author's creative mastery at the mature height of his power. Here again, he works directly upon the narrative of Plutarch, following it at times with even an unnecessary

fidelity, at times disregarding it pointedly, and creating or developing personalities at will. Here we can follow his artistic processes, and the lines of his interests. The Cleopatra of the opening scenes is wholly of his making, and is sketched in deliberate disregard of some later accounts by Plutarch of her way of seeking to hold Antony : while the later scene of her fury with the messenger who tells of Antony's marriage is wholly invented, albeit in terms of the idea of Cleopatra supplied by Plutarch towards the close. Other figures who are little more than names in the history are similarly incarnated : the Iras and Charmian of the second scene are of the dramatist's shaping and colouring ; and the keen Enobarbus, of whom Plutarch tells almost nothing save the bare episode of his desertion, pardon, and death, is an independent creation, serving as a foil, a commentator, and a companion figure to Antony throughout. Lepidus, again, who is but a name in Plutarch, is dramatically exhibited as a nullity ; while the drinking scene of the triumvirs, like the jesting scene of the maids, is invented to meet English tastes. Much of the action did not admit of reproduction ; and its variety vetoed any such unity of structure as is achieved in *Coriolanus* ; but the ever-changing scene is charged with an incomparable wealth of life ; and in the great central figures of the powerful animal man



and woman, neither good nor wholly bad, yet both splendid in death, we have presentments of humanity as vividly interesting as Hamlet's self.

Already we are past the day of Elizabeth ; and in his closing years, writing the *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, with their developed plot-interest, we seem to see the prematurely aging playwright rather wistfully taking up the plot-methods of the younger men, yet still with an art transcending theirs as much in veracity as in beauty, even when he subordinates truth of tragedy to the popular craving for a "happy ending."

The *Tempest* cannot be, as men would fain have it, his last work. Its versification is not of his very latest : that is to be seen in his portions of *Henry VIII* (in which he collaborated with Fletcher), in *Cymbeline*, and in the *Winter's Tale*. In the *Tempest* he placed the most majestic lines he ever wrote : in the later plays he has so far recoiled from the "end-stopped" verse of his youth, and is so unconcerned about smoothness of diction, that he becomes frequently obscure by excess of concision, and makes it doubly easy for us, in the *Henry VIII*, to separate his close-wrought and vibrating verse from the many monotonous sets of lines ending in dissyllables, so often quoted as his with uncritical praise. But in the *Winter's Tale*, where the old tragic power is allayed by an indulgent kindness,

as of a tired old man entertaining maidens, he preserves not only his astonishing verisimilitude of impersonation, but his power to blend words with a beauty which seems to transmute them into music. *Cymbeline*, as a whole, tells unmistakably of failing powers; yet is the figure of Imogen beyond the reach of any other poet of the age. In no serious play of his, indeed, is the note of greatness lacking. When *Timon* and *Pericles* are denuded of their alien material, as has been vigilantly done by Mr. Fleay, they stand almost on a level with the second-best plays, so fine and firm is the workmanship. Even in the *Troilus and Cressida*, a baffling and disconcerting play \* in which the far-off Homeric world is perversely transposed to the key of Elizabethan intrigue and envious rivalry and turbulent self-seeking, as if in Aristophanic derision of Chapman's hero-worship—even here, where again other men's work seems to have given him his lead, the poet bestows on us some of his finest didactic verse, clothed in his richest diction; and in the title-characters he triumphantly reveals his unmatched power alike of pitiless and pathetic portraiture.

Still on the seeds of all he made,  
The rose of beauty burns.

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\* It is now certain that this play was not new when published in 1609. It was probably written or adapted about 1599.

Our praise, indeed, applies mainly to his dramas. It is one of the puzzles of literature that this master of great rhythm and intensely concentrated dramatic utterance should have first sought and won fame by the publication of two long rhymed poems which even in that age of diffuse poetry are notable no less for their prolixity than for their sheer smooth fluency. Had he left nothing but the *Venus* and the *Lucrece*, we could not really have known that he possessed genius, so wanting are they in nearly all that makes his plays immortal. He would seem indeed to have written them by way of earning something in a year in which the plague, closing the theatres, suspended his ordinary means of living. So produced, they yet won him instant fame in his day, so easily did he frame what his public cared for. The far more memorable Sonnets, in nearly all of which he so easily excels most of the contemporary practitioners of that form, and rivals the best, were clearly not meant for publication, though the problem of their origin remains unsolved save by conflicting hypotheses ; and for the rest we have but a few doubtful poems from him, published with some certainly not his, to reveal his lyric faculty, apart from the songs scattered through the plays. These, so exquisite at their best, he seems to have penned simply for their stage purpose. The ethereal lines :

Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea change  
Into something rich and strange,

and the "Take, oh take those lips away," were for this magician things by the way, fortuities of his main tasks. There is something staggering in the reflection that those tasks themselves were the outcome rather of the need to live than of the need to sing.

This is the explanation of much of the comparative triviality of some of his early work. The doctrine (fulminated by Jonson and Chapman and held by Bacon) that the drama was properly a means of edification, never troubled Shakespeare. He had not sought the theatre with missionary motives. From the first, his instinctive judgment withheld him from the graver stage sins against good feeling; but for the rest he was minded to move and entertain by his art, not to edify by his explicit teaching, apart from the spontaneous moralizings which fitted his personages to their situations. And so he makes his clowns pun for punning's sake, and splash in ribaldry for gross mirth's sake, because that was the popular taste of the time; and provides farcial relief to comedy, comic relief to tragedy, because the audiences so willed it. It was only at the height of his power that, in a much deepened mood, his sheer genius for verisimilitude, his spontaneous concern to hold a mirror up to nature, moved him to

turn the very Fool into a new recruit of tragedy, and to transcend at length even the chosen plane of poetic diction, on which he distanced all rivalry, with Lear's "Prithee, undo this button." Pressures of fortune, as it happens now and then, had sent to his true task a genius who was to be made one of the great artists of all time.

We have the more occasion to be thankful for the chance. Save for his manifold handiwork, ranging from the most joyous mirth to the darkest tragedy, we should never have known the possibilities of English poetic drama. Without him, we feel, the loud wild world of the Elizabethan stage would have lacked the most precious of its lights, its clearest sunshine and the starry sanity with which he enspheres its tragic night. None of them all could vie with him in the realization of the immanence of evil in life: their darkest pictures suggest rather a violent extraction of horrors for horror's sake, where in his hands goodness and sin alike seem part of the natural process of things. Yet no less had he excelled in his early power of steeping life in radiance: the faculty which could carry romantic comedy to the height of happiness was that which, turning away from joy, carried tragedy to the verge of emotional endurance, and yet again, in the last phase of its creative power, gave us both the light and the shadow in the balance of the large vision

which sees all. No other writer, in any literature, has exhibited this catholicity of sympathy. Over and above all, he is the supreme master of blank-verse rhythm, so possessing it that hundreds of his lines, after the hundredth reading, yield us an "unspent beauty of surprise." But for him, we should not have known what the chance-made instrument could achieve. And still he is but the greatest master in a unique school, growing from it and relating to it in his faults even as in his excellences.

His superiority alike to his contemporaries and his successors, which is apt to be made a theme of rather barren wonderment, should hint to us that the full force of the contrast depends partly on the special circumstances. Merely to say that never since has such genius existed is at once to go beyond our real warrant and to miss recognition of some of the most relevant facts. It is quite true that no such combination of poetic and dramatic power as Shakespeare's has ever recurred in the drama; but it does not follow that such genius has never since potentially existed. It is important to realize that even a second Shakespeare in almost any subsequent period, certainly in our own day, would be debarred from bestowing on his work such literary splendour as blazes from the great tragedies of the great master. Not only is the great poetry often dramatically supererogatory even

when the poetic form is taken for granted—so much can be established by comparing highly poetic scenes with others where fine poetry was equally admissible, but is not forthcoming—the very conduct of the play at times transcends the plane of drama proper. Charles Lamb was quite right in saying that *Lear* transcends the stage. To say nothing of the idealization of evil *qua* evil in the terrific personalities of Regan, Goneril, and Edmund, the tremendous scene of Lear's madness in the storm is capable only of a mental realization. To reply that so great a master of stagecraft as Shakespeare would never have put upon the stage more than it could carry is not merely to beg the question, but to ignore the instances in which he himself can be seen to have retrenched parts of his work as being perceptibly out of the dramatic orbit. *Lear* was not written in a mood of cool æsthetic calculation; and in point of fact the backgrounding of the tempest of Lear's soul with a tempest in nature is a psychological master-stroke which defies concrete representation. Either the physical storm or the actor must give way, for physical reasons. So great an actor as Salvini, superbly fitted in voice and person as in power of passion to carry off the scene, failed at this point to attain the *imaginable* effect: actor and audience alike felt the physical overstrain set up by the unearthly climax.

But this very scene is for the reader one of the crowning manifestations of Shakespeare's power ; and its production was made possible only by the general openness of the Elizabethan stage to all manner of experiment, and by Shakespeare's own position of authority in his company. Modern drama, in commercial theatres, is conditioned by the need for long "runs" to cover large expenses : Shakespeare was free, within the limits of his own discretion, to load a play with purely literary value to an extent which modern managers could not permit. Above all, he had the stimulus of the free poetic form, which not only allowed but demanded beauty and force of diction for diction's sake. And this gives us one of our clues to his work in some doubtful cases. It would be strange if any lesser man could have so copied his voice as to give us those "Shakespearean" passages in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Sir Thomas More* which so many critics have felt to be his. But sometimes there is no room for doubt. In *Pericles*, so much of which as it stands is impossibly bad for him, there are expressions which we know could only be his. A great living master, the author of *Typhoon*, has in that story employed pages of admirable description to express the sheer immensity of the uproar of a hurricane, in which a cry shouted in a comrade's ear is as a remote murmur.



## 200 ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

In *Pericles* the idea is put in a line and a half :

The seaman's whistle  
Is as a whisper in the ear of death,  
Unheard.

This is the lion's claw : no other man could so strike with words ; and effects such as these, impossible in our modern realistic drama, but main items in our conception of Shakespeare, are specialities of the art form in which he is the supreme executant.

### CHAPTER IX

#### PROSE FICTION

It is a somewhat puzzling fact that the kind of literature which seems to us most naturally popular should have made comparatively small progress, either as to quantity or as to quality, in a period in which we have seen poetry and prose, and above all, poetic drama, so rapidly developing in power and vogue. In our own day, prose fiction has many times more readers than either poetry or history. In the England of Elizabeth there was but little prose fiction to read, and that little was not to be compared with the current drama either in psychological or in narrative interest. But the special problem merges in a larger one. Prose fiction was a late development

in ancient as in modern literature ; and its advance was slow for more than a century after the death of Elizabeth. In an age abounding in action and adventure, the novel of action and adventure was little attempted ; and in an age much given to dramatic psychology the psychological novel hardly emerges. Not till the eighteenth century were the English to have *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and *Clarissa* : and not till the nineteenth were the French to have Dumas or Balzac. It is clear that either psychological or economic influences stood in the way of, or were lacking to promote, the systematic development of the prose tale or romance.

In the early Tudor days, men read the *Morte d'Arthur*, *Huon of Bordeaux*, and *Guy of Warwick* very much as they read chronicles or the *Lyf of Charles the Grete*, though from Caxton onwards there were many avowals of the dubiety of such quasi-histories. These early French romances have indeed a charm of concreteness and of artless movement to which we can still turn with zest ; but the real novelist for that age, alike for character-drawing and for narrative, would seem to have been Chaucer, who had freely drawn upon and transcended the tale-tellers of Southern Europe. At a time when Chaucer's metre was no longer understood, it would seem a simple thing for a prose-writer to have

sought after Chaucerian narrative effects of a medium which relieved him of the burdens in rhyme and metre, especially when there were current translations from Boccaccio to point the way. But though the translations multiplied, the response in native invention remained slight and unsatisfactory.

A large part of the explanation lies in the simple economic circumstances. In Shakespeare's day only a minority of men, and only a small number of women, could read ; while the drama had an economic basis alike in the reading class and in the large class of illiterates, for whom the drama was a gateway to a semblance of historical and other knowledge as well as to entertainment. There was thus a constant demand for new plays ; and the playwrights, if ill-paid, were at least always being tempted to produce ; while no man could hope by writing tales to make a living—the chief motive to novel-writing in later periods. But the psychic circumstances were also unfavourable to rapid development in fiction. Drama was bound in its own nature to attain to something of method, order, and brevity if it was to live. The French cycles which took eight days to play were out of the question for the London theatres ; and the "two hours' traffic of our stage" meant an ordered plot, in which things happened consecutively and significantly, making a coherent and intelligible whole. Character-

painting was part of the economy of the process ; and the actor's art made a constant appeal for its development, and for the subordination to it of the discursive poetry which was the main obstacle to dramatic realism. But the tale-teller who could not invent new and good plots, and who relied on a string of episodes and conversations, lay under no saving check from circumstance, and was inevitably unprepared to make the brooding study of life which alone can yield great work in fiction form. Thus the prose tale, taken over by English literature from the large stores of Italy and France, led to no such native growth as took place in drama. Some development there was, but it was mainly unfortunate and impermanent.

Shortly before Elizabeth's accession there was produced *The Hundred Merry Tales* (1557), a translation of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, the long popularity of which is attested by Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* ; and about ten years later there appeared the collection known as Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7), wherein are translated a hundred and one tales—some thirty-six from the classics ; some forty from the Italian of Boccaccio and Bandello, mainly by way of the French of Belleforest ; and the rest chiefly from Queen Margaret's *Hep-tameron*. Between Painter's start and the year 1583, there appeared seven other similar

collections, some of which ran into several editions, being helped thereto by Ascham's vigorous vilification of the species ; but the *Palace of Pleasure* is by far the largest, and is in every way the most important.

Painter's compilation, which by its proffer of plots deeply and decisively influenced the Elizabethan drama, contains much that is at a higher level of moral and literary effort than the generally improper *Merry Tales* of France, including as it does not only Da Porto's immortal tale of Romeo and Juliet (recast and not improved by Bandello), but a number in which the characters of the personages form the pivot of the story. These character-studies are indeed rather crude in their kind, running to extreme cases of self-will and self-abnegation ; but to the novel of character, of which they are among the first essays, they distinctly belong. Yet, belonging though they mostly do to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they remain above the plane of the English prose fiction of the Elizabethan age. Boccaccio's *Decameron* represented the fruitage of whole centuries of the multiplex civilization of the Italian republics, with a further culling from that of Byzantium, purveyed by exiles from Constantinople, and large draughts from the old *fabliaux* of France, in which Boccaccio was only too well grounded through his early sojourn in Paris. Chaucer in the fourteenth

century was quite abreast of the psychology of Boccaccio's narrative poems ; and he told in *Troilus and Criseyde* the story of a great passion more subtly and tenderly than it is told in Boccaccio's poem on the same theme, *Filostrato*, or even in his powerful prose romance of *Fiammetta* ; but upon Chaucer's age there had followed a century of storm and strife, in which English literature had stagnated and eddied like a stopped stream. Poetry recovered and drama leaped up under Elizabeth, but not so the art of narrative fiction.

Italian influence is ostensibly present in the first native novel of the age, George Gascoigne's *The Adventures of Master F. J.*, later entitled *The Pleasant Fable of Ferdinando Jeronimi and Leonora de Velasco*, translated out of the Italian Tales of Bartello, written about 1571, and first published in 1573. Apropos of its title, it has to be said that it is not pleasant, it is not a fable, and it is not translated from the Italian, Bartello being a myth. But it is a notable performance. It is remarked concerning Gascoigne, whom we have already met with as an early poet, that he wrote "the first prose tale of modern life, the first prose comedy, the first tragedy translated from the Italian, the first maske, the first regular satire, the first treatise on poetry in English." All this is in itself remarkable : and while the other "firsts" are chiefly

memorable as being such, the *Adventures of F. J.* in its sinister fashion has a somewhat arresting quality. It is a corrupt and withal a confused narrative, strongly suggesting a garbled version of an actual intrigue in England; but it is written simply, sanely, and swiftly, with a directness of aim in striking contrast with the discursive ways of Lilly and Greene. It was in Gascoigne to have become an artist had he been less of a knave, and had his fortunes left him less free to be a dilettante. His women have a touch of actuality which in those of Greene and Lilly, if ever perceptible, is lost in the rattle of their euphuistic rhetoric.

Lilly's two *Euphues* books (1579-80), loaded as they are with disquisition, have to be estimated as novels; and in that aspect they are most charitably to be recognized as the work of a young man of five-and-twenty, inevitably handicapped by his lack of deep experience. Over every page is the trail of the "clever-young-mannishness" that has been complained of in the early comedies of Shakespeare. The main plot of the first resolves itself into the tale of the winning away of Lucilla, the fiancée of Philautus, by his friend Euphues, who in turn is jilted by Lucilla for a third suitor. The lady, if ever seen in life, is not made intelligible in the story, being a mere violently-pulled puppet whose figure death itself cannot make tragic;

and the men, who quarrel coarsely, are no more attractive or interesting than she is. There is thus nothing to redeem the insupportable hail of artificial simile, antithesis, alliteration, and classical allusion, which pelts on till the maddened reader is fain to cry with mine host in Chaucer, "No more of this!" To find any enduring interest in the book, we must fasten on the included treatises, of which that dealing with education is substantially copied from Plutarch, but which among them give some notion of the culture-life of Elizabethan England.

The second book, *Euphues and his England*, is dedicated to "the ladies and gentelwomen of England" as well as to the "gentelmen readers" appealed to in the 1581 edition of the first. The ladies had indeed small cause to be delighted with that; but in the second they are more agreeably dealt with. Still there is no valid characterization: the women characters are described, never presented; and their harangues are as tediously didactic, as impossibly artificial, if not so monstrously protracted as those of the men. The story, if it can be so called, is in fact little more than a series of harangues, varied by didactic or disputatious epistles and by narratives in which A tells the instructive tale of B, who is almost immediately made to begin an edifying tale of C. There is no advance in fictive art on the *Anatomy of Wit*; the herbs



and birds and stones pullulate as before ; and as in the *Anatomy* we end by fastening on the included treatises, so in *Euphues and his England* we are fain to find our interest in the final *Euphues' Glass for Europe*, in which description of England and her inhabitants lapses into harangue, like everything else in the volume. *Euphues*, in short, was but a nine years' wonder for an immature world ; incapable of constituting a good school either of style or of fiction, though the editions went on at intervals down to 1636. It had pains and cleverness enough spent on it to make a great book ; but for lack of real genius and human insight it remains but a monument of wrong art, tolerable only on the score that the art of the rest of the world in that field was mostly no better.

Infelicitous as was the experiment of Lilly (who never tried again in fiction), the no less famous attempt of Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, was hardly more durable. When posthumously published in 1590 it took the wind out of the sails of *Euphues*, and it kept its vogue longer, in virtue of being less irksome in style and more various in its attempts at human interest. But Sidney, scribbling his romantic medley for the entertainment of his sister at the age of twenty-five or twenty-six, made like Lilly (though certainly riper than he) the mistake of dabbling in fiction before he

had adequately studied life and character ; and, like him, employed stiff artistic conventions for the presentment of an infinitely difficult and delicate subject-matter. It is always to be remembered, indeed, that he had no design of publication, and actually expressed the wish that his manuscript should be destroyed. The intellectual modesty which graces the critical confidence of the *Apology for Poetry* was indeed such as could reveal to him that great books are not to be produced as pastimes. But for that age the *Arcadia* was even more of an event than the *Euphues* ; and the beloved memory of Sidney escaped the rebound of alert criticism which soon fell upon the fame of Lilly.

As we have noted, Sidney's *Arcadia* is primarily inspired by the old romance of Heliodorus, then coming into European knowledge. For the rest, it looks to previous continental " pastorals " and to the romances of chivalry ; never attaining to any new and vital conception of the art of narrative invention. Behind the pseudo-classic names which help to keep the story out of any historical frame there is indeed some play of the actual human passions which filled the stage of life in England as abundantly as elsewhere ; and there is often a certain vivacity in the narrative of the emotional passages which arouses in a modern reader the hope of hearing the right word, the

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genuine utterance of human feeling. But the hope is always deferred by the fluent prolixity of the narrative, and the fatal facility with which all the characters alike turn feeling into declamation. Had Sidney lived to witness the great drama that grew out of the rude beginnings which repelled him, he would haply have realized the might of simplicity and naturalness : as it is, his traditions keep him much less realistic, much more essentially rhetorical in prose dialogue than are the later dramatists in their blank verse.

As to episode, he is far behind Heliodorus, who, doubtless proceeding upon a previous evolution of narrative technique, skilfully keeps up a continuous thread of interest through an abundance of relevant and exciting incident. In short, the *Arcadia* is to be read not for its interest as a novel, but for the historic and literary interest it sets up as a vigorous experiment by a powerful mind, at once literary and trained to action, in an unfortunate and impermanent art-form. It is much more readable than the Euphues books. Sidney, indeed, was infected with the mannerism of verbal and phrasal antithesis which in Lilly was a mania ; and he never in this book attains save momentarily to the balance of style which the sincerity of his purpose and his purport enabled him to compass in the *Apology*. But he does not progress constantly upon antithesis as upon

wooden stilts, in the manner of Lilly: the sentence can take other forms and vary its cadence, especially when the reflection is worth it; and often it has enough of artificial grace, and even of true feeling, to explain to us the warmth of its acceptance in its generation. Sidney had, in fact, an element of the higher genius that the glittering Lilly lacked. They are akin chiefly in their supererogation of words, their overdrafts upon utterance in proportion to their matter, and their consequent infliction of a burden of unnatural loquacity upon their personages. *Et in Arcadia ego*, Lilly might have said; though Sidney is the finer writer as well as the greater man of the two.

It is no contradiction of the denial of fruitfulness in the case of Lilly to say that two other Elizabethan story-tellers, one of them still readable with pleasure, the other much read in his day, enrolled themselves under his banner. Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590) actually had for sub-title *Euphues' Golden Legacy . . . bequeathed to Philautus' Sons*; and Robert Greene certainly aped and parroted Lilly through a dozen prose tales. But Lodge in *Rosalynde* merely employed Lilly's mannerisms in a new kind of story-telling; whereas in Greene there is no abiding element apart from the sombre interest of his tales of rascality from the underworld in which he dived so deeply.

Even as to that, indeed, he is indebted to earlier writers on similar topics. Lodge reveals himself as the one of the three who could really conceive an interesting plot, with interesting characters, and keep the story and the personages going without getting bogged in rhetoric and irrelevance. In that age of versatilities, when so many men not only alternated freely between writing and action, but freely tried so many forms of writing, Lodge stands out notably, having figured as dramatist, narrative poet, briefless barrister, pamphleteer, story-teller, sonneteer, satirist, translator, and soldier-sailor before settling down as translator and physician. As adaptable as Gascoigne, he had more mental force, and his tale of *Rosalynde* proves him to have had a better heart. His first attempt at fiction, *The Delectable History of Forbonius and Prisceria* (1584), is indeed an unimpressive performance, in which the slightest of plots is made a peg for a series of declamations and poems. The hero and heroine are thwarted in the immemorial way by the lady's stern father; she being sent to be immured in his country castle, where the hero, of course, finds access to her in disguise. He there recites for her entertainment and the advancement of his own suit a mass of verse; till the father again supervenes with a furious veto, which is speedily withdrawn, and the pair live happy ever

after, like any other "walking" lady and gentleman.

*Rosalynde* is a much more original and a much more interesting tale. It is indeed by a long way the best of his handful of tales, which mostly suggest mere imitation of models in Greene's gallery. Founded on the old ballad-tale of Gamelyn, driven to outlawry by his bad brother, it develops the whole main-plot of *As You Like It*, Shakespeare having added only the humorous under-plot of Touchstone and Audrey, and the character of Jaques, with, of course, that whole blessed atmosphere of humour which no other romanticist of the day could create, though Lodge's fiction is not so destitute in that regard as that of Lilly and Sidney and Greene.

The weakness of *Rosalynde* is just in the euphuistic machinery of mechanical antithesis in phrase, modish multiplication of simile, saw, and metaphor, and the constant substitution of harangue and apostrophe for true dialogue—all combining to create an effect of restless garrulity and thoughtless bustle. There is no sense of critical or artistic control, and sheer fear of being dull often brings out tedium. As regards the device of inserted poetry, Lodge succeeds rather better than Sidney, who so frequently drops into poetry in the *Arcadia* without making us sorry to go back to prose. Lodge's

pieces in *Rosalynde* have a reasonable amount of connexion with the story; and though there are too many of them, the madrigal "Love in my bosom like a bee" would make a pleasant interruption anywhere. They all tell of that over-exuberance, that boundless loquacity, which marks most Elizabethan prose before Bacon, and most verse before the maturity of Shakespeare—a surplusage which seems part of the superabundance of vitality that wells up everywhere in the life of the epoch. Too often does the Elizabethan artist thus "die in his own too much," losing intensity in what the age called "copie." If Lodge had been less responsive to leads, less of a literary copyist, less eager to echo both Lilly and Greene, he might have left a deeper stamp upon Elizabethan literature. As it is, he remains one of its noticeable figures.

The puzzling thing about his fiction is that he not only never repeats the success of *Rosalynde*, but reverts to a far lower level. In 1591 he produced an elaborate rewriting of the old quasi-biography of *Robert Second, Duke of Normandy*, otherwise *Robert the Devil*; and thereafter, in 1596, a thing professedly taken from the Spanish, but possibly all his own, *A Margarite of America*, the most senseless literary construction of the period. The case of the wicked Robert appears to have suggested to him the idea of a story of another wicked prince; but the

grim old tale of sin and repentance had taught him nothing of the arts of verisimilitude. The novel sets out with an account of the stopping of an imminent battle between two emperors by an old gentleman of philosophic habit, who steps between the hosts to deliver an essay of two quarto pages in condemnation of war. After this idyllic start there comes a delirious succession of treacheries, crimes, tortures, and other atrocities, variegated by strokes of magic, and ending in a general funeral. The whole action is a mere nightmare.

By Lodge's own picturesque account, this egregious narrative was penned by him, as was *Rosalynde*, on an adventurous voyage, in the Straits of Magellan, "in which place to the southward many wonderous Isles, many strange fishes, many monstrous Patagones, withdrew my senses"—circumstances which are partly explanatory. "The time I wrote in," he tells again, "was when I had rather will to get my dinner than to win my fame. The order I wrote in was past order, when I rather observed men's hands lest they should strike me, than curious reason of men to condemn me. In a word, I wrote under hope rather the fish should eat both me writing and my paper written, than fame should know me, hope should acquaint her with me, or any but misery should hear mine ending." The explanation, in brief, is that in 1592 he



was "at sea with M. Candish (whose memory, if I repent not, I lament not)," and had a very bad time of it. Writing his mad story by way of a distraction, he strung it with a series of poems and euphuistic dissertations, which partly did duty for epistles and dialogue, a number of the amorous pieces being hardily presented as effusions by the wicked prince in praise of the last lady of his choice. The whole constitutes a singular vision of one side of Elizabethan life, setting up a hearty wish that the irrepressible belletrist had given us an account of his actual experience under "M. Candish" instead of a tale in the manner of *Euphues* and the narrative taste of *Bedlam*.

Greene, with his much larger output in fiction, did nothing so attractive as *Rosalynde*, but nothing so extravagant as this; and in his series of part-narrative papers on "Cony-catching" and his *Life and Death of Ned Broome*, he attains to a measure of realism which Lodge never attempted. Yet Greene's *Pandosto*, otherwise *Dorastus and Fawnia*, upon which Shakespeare founded the *Winter's Tale*, is finally repulsive in a way only possible to Greene, and not to be guessed from Shakespeare's transmutation. The bulk of Greene's prose fiction, in short, is no longer readable, popular as it was for a whole generation. His romantic tales, written in Lilly's style after bad Italian models, with a fluency that out-

goes even the Elizabethan standard, are strangely wanting in the note of reality which he was able several times to sound in his plays. This indeed is in keeping with the law already noted, in terms of which drama soon compels or invites an approach to verisimilitude that is not accepted by fiction till after generations of slipshod experiment. We are not entitled to say that if Shakespeare had written tales he would so far have transcended the lax technique of his day as to produce something commensurate in power with his dramas. The narrative recitals of his characters are on the whole the least convincing parts of his plays : it is in the height of psychic action that he becomes the unmatched master. When Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo he gasps a question which is the very quintessence of dramatic perception, setting our nerves tingling or shuddering with its impact :

Which of you have done this ?

When Iras sees at a flash the ruin of Cleopatra's hopes, she puts in a line and a half the commentary which the novelists of the time would have beaten out into a page at least :

Finish, good lady, the bright day is done,  
And we are for the dark.

Though the older romancers, French and other, often attain in their naïve way to ap-

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proximate effects of spontaneity, the Elizabethan novelists, Greene as little as any, had not a glimpse of this electric power of simple and concentrated speech: they seem literally to have regarded their characters as puppets for whom they had to "patter" fluently in the fashion of the actual puppet show. The knavish Gascoigne alone, perhaps in virtue of recalling actual action, approaches to a plausible realism in the talk of his personages. Greene, setting to work on his stories before he had even tried his hand on a play, is as voluble and as external as well might be; and he never gets abreast of his art. In his better plays he seems at times really to visualize a character; and a line or two of Margaret at the fair in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*:

We country sluts of merry Fressingfield,  
Come to buy needless naughts to make us fine,

can live in memory as something of life recovered from oblivion. But the good women in his stories, though at times made thinkable in respect of their action, never strike this note in their talk. They remain moralizing or euphuizing rhetoricians, literally "talking like a book"—the book of Euphues—with a deadly verbosity, and wholly failing to materialize for us as real people. Curiously enough, the bad women, whom he almost never introduces in his plays, come nearer

creating the artistic illusion. At bottom, it may be suspected, lies the economic bane, the need to produce rapidly a considerable mass of manuscript, paid for at a low rate. Hence hasty narrative, and an infinity of declamation in place of possible dialogue.

It is to Nashe in fiction, as in humorous prose, that we must turn for our best taste of the time. *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1593) may have been motived by the Spanish picaresque romance *Lazarillo de Tormes*, translated in 1576; but it is developed in a quite independent way, with a range of effect, tragic and comic, which the Spanish masterpiece does not cover. It begins in a quite circumstantial fashion with the picaresque reminiscences of the page Jack Wilton, at the siege of Tournay and Térouanne in the reign of Henry VIII. Thence Jack returns to England, to be driven forth again by the sweating sickness; and the scene changes to Munster, where we witness the destruction of the Anabaptists led by John of Leiden. Famous men come into the narrative; first, the poet Earl of Surrey, then Erasmus and Thomas More, concerning whom Nashe says but little, checking here his abundant vein of invention and commentary, and contenting himself with citing their known opinions. With less eminent personages his wit plays freely; and the description of a disputation of orators at Wittemberg is one of the hap-

piest of his extravaganzas. Surrey, in whose service Jack Wilton enters, is duly carried to Italy, where he never was, legend here supplying Nashe with matter.

From this point adventurous incident multiplies, very much in the fashion later associated with Defoe, but with less than his regard for decorum. Jack Wilton's tale is in fact the first effective autobiographical romance in English, and at the same time the first realistic tale of modern life, apart from Greene's accounts of the ways of criminals. Written in the incomparably racy English of which Nashe was the sole master, with all his wealth of vivid comment, it constitutes a new departure in Tudor literature. And yet, strange to say, it had no such vogue as was won by many of the euphuistic romances of Greene. Either Nashe's realism was too gross for the "Gentlemen Readers"—and it can be gross enough—or the very idea of realism in prose fiction was still too strange for the reading world to welcome. We are to remember that neither biography nor autobiography could yet be said to exist in English, Fulke Greville's *Life of Sidney* being left for the next age; and, strange as the idea may seem to-day, the autobiographical form of Nashe's romance would itself, probably, be an odd novelty. Yet he is tolerably conventional in the harangues which he puts in the mouths of villains and victims in some

of his most desperate scenes. Here he displays in some degree the common weakness of his art in his time, resorting to formal rhetoric for lack of due intensity of psychic force. It is as a humorist that he is most himself. But between the freshness and verve of his invention and description, and his wild variety of realistic incident, his performance is as remarkable as its failure to win vogue or set a fashion. On the side of fiction, once more, English taste was as yet merely nascent.

A less gifted writer, who passed out of sight within a century, after having been much more popular than Nashe, is found to be much more obviously in the direct line of evolution. Thomas Deloney, weaver, pamphleteer, and ballad-maker, struck out a species of simple story-telling which was greatly to the taste of immediate posterity, and has plain affinities with the more developed English novel of the eighteenth century. Probably descended from a French Huguenot named Delaunay, he may have known French; but his way of working is substantially English, as are his themes. *The Pleasant History of Jack of Newberie* (1597) and *The Pleasant History of Thomas of Reading* (1599) proceed on English traditions and deal with English life, English places, English names—a simple bid for popularity which had not suggested itself to Lilly, Sidney, Greene, or Lodge. The art, sooth to say, is

crude enough. *Jack of Newberie* first presents the beginnings of John Winchcomb, a celebrated weaver, who rose to be master of two hundred workers in Henry VIII's time ; telling how his master's widow insisted on marrying him ; whereafter a standing comic story of a staid husband and an unruly wife is made to do biographical duty. Jack's second marriage, however, is treated with true local colour ; and his services with his company of armed journeymen at the battle of Flodden are made much of, with songs and ballads to diversify the entertainment. For lack of narrative matter, chapter fifth is constituted of a list "of the pictures which Jack of Newberie had in his house, whereby he encouraged his servants to seek for fame and dignity," the said pictures being portraits of kings, emperors, and popes, plus one philosopher, who had all risen to greatness from lowly status ; and chapter sixth deals with the difficulties set up by legislative restraints on trade. Thereafter come episodes slenderly connected with the hero, rounding the book off into a medley of quasi-biography and romantic anecdote.

Deloney's most ambitious composition is *The Gentle Craft*, in two parts (1597-8), "a Discourse containing many matters of Delight, very pleasant to be read : Shewing what famous men have been shoemakers in time past in this land, with their worthy deeds and

great hospitality. Set forth with Pictures, and variety of Wit and Mirth. Declaring the cause why it is called the Gentle Craft, and also how the proverb first grew. A Shoemaker's Son is a Prince born. T. D." The heroes and heroines of the first part of the medley are St. Hugh and Winifred ; the brothers Crispianus and Crispine, and Ursula ; and Simon Eyre of London ; and its popularity is attested by Dekker's adoption of the last tale as the basis of his *Shoemaker's Holiday*. But there is no artistic advance in Deloney's work, which indeed was packed within a space of some three years. His simple ambitions were confined to multiplying episodic interest ; and though his ordinary style has the merit of a simplicity disdained by the leading story-writers of the age, he did not scruple to borrow some of their euphuistic devices for purposes of embellishment.

In sum, he is an attractive if undistinguished figure, a man of the people, who knew their life, and might have deserved better of us if he had been content to tell of it more carefully. But he, like his more cultured congeners, was mainly concerned to make a living by his pen-work ; and the result is a miscellany of tales, ballads, and pamphlets which attest rather his cheerful industry than his inspiration. It is as an early apprentice in what was one day to become a great art that he appeals to the student now.



## CHAPTER X

## THE LATER DRAMATISTS

FOR some of those who most keenly realize the marvellousness of Shakespeare's power, there is a certain difficulty in grouping him with his corrivals. It seems a case of "Eclipse first and the rest nowhere." Genius seems to obliterate mere talent, as the sun's light the stars. But in all such impressions, which belong specifically to the psychosis of youth, there is something of hallucination, even if "whom genius deludes is well deluded." Much of the intensity of the impression made by Shakespeare is due to the unmatched charm of his verse-rhythm; though his Falstaff-scenes sufficiently remind us that his amazing power of seizing character is something over and above his poetry. But Marlowe of the mighty line is in his elemental way a master too; and Ben Jonson, who had a gift for prose proper that Shakespeare lacked, is a memorable dramatic figure. The inferiority of these powerful workers may be summed up in saying that in them the elements of greatness are much less happily mixed.

Jonson, like Marlowe, comes forward in revolt against other men's dramatic methods; but his revolt is in the spirit of prose, whereas Marlowe's was in the spirit of one vein of poetry. The musical charm of Shakespeare's

comedies, with their plots from romance and wonderland, seems to have been alien to Jonson's critical bent ; though in his masques and other later works he partly harks back to it. The pursuit of sensuous beauty of sound by Spenser, at the cost of verbiage, left him equally cold. Himself "rammed with life," he demanded a drama that should portray the "humours" or idiosyncrasies of the life around him ; oddly limiting his plea, however, to the case of comedy. In tragedy he cleaved to the antique, producing his *Sejanus* (1603), and *Catiline* (1609) with an immensity of labour and documentary learning of which no previous playwright had dreamt. But it was to comedy that he gave most of his creative effort ; and it was in this that he made his mark, in so far as he found theatrical success at all. In the Prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* he scoffs, as Sidney had done, at the plays in which a personage grows from an infant to an old man ; and no less at the chronicle plays, with their properties of "some few foot-and-half-foot-swords," their chorus which "wafts you o'er the seas," their mechanism of lowered thrones ; and their squibs, stage-thunder, and drum-storms. He will give, not these,

But deeds, and language such as men do use,  
And persons such as comedy would choose  
When she would show an image of the times,  
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.

To this claim he does not strictly live up : his *Volpone* will not square with his doctrine. But in *Every Man in his Humour* he sought to fulfil it, making the action turn solely on the play of *tics* of character and tricks of action in a day of London life, without a touch of romance or poetry. It is all as original and as powerful in its own way as Marlowe's tragedy ; and he who would seek the local colour of Cockney life in that day should peruse the piece, with the later *Bartholomew's Fair*, and the trilogy of *Westward Ho*, *Eastward Ho*, and *Northward Ho*, in the second of which Jonson collaborated with Chapman and Marston ; the others being by Dekker and Webster.

But Jonson's comedy is joyless, and his serried tragedy cold. They are alike travails of understanding rather than of art ; labours of the faculty of moral criticism, not births of artistic genius. The labour is so strenuous and the critical faculty so vigorous that they compel critical interest ; but we are conscious always of an appeal rather to a jury collected to censure manners and indict follies and crimes than to our spontaneous sense of truth to life, and our interest in a sequence of events. Even in his realistic comedy he clings to the unrealistic expedient of the soliloquy ; and he is capable of making a soliloquist express a fear that he may have been overheard—a crudity of art from which

the mature Shakespeare would have recoiled. The characters, too, always tend to be mere characteristics personified; the satire and the censure overlay the action, alike in tragedy and in comedy; and the fun is strident in the lightest scenes. To use an overworn but convenient term, Jonson is not sympathetic. He rarely, in Walton's phrase, "handles his frog as if he loved him." There is more of pure laughter in one Falstaff scene than in all Ben's plays; for "humour" in his hands seldom rises from its primary to its modern sense; and in the plays in which he thrashes his hostile rivals, Marston and Dekker, we hear rather the stertorous snort of defiance than the chuckle of the true humorist.

One of the likeliest of the guesses which identify personalities in some of the plays of the period is that which finds in Alexander's description of Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare's *riposte* for some of Jonson's jovial jeers at him or his comrades. In *The Return from Parnassus* (circa 1601), one of a set of university plays in which actors and poets are satirized and criticized, one of the lampooned players tells how

Few of the university pen plays well. . . . Why here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down—ay, and Ben Jonson too. O! that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow; he brought up Horace, giving the poets a pill; but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge, that made him bewray his credit.

If the "purge" is still extant, it may well consist of the passage in question :

This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions ; he is valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant ; a man in whom nature hath so crowded *humours*, that his valour is crushed into folly, his folly sauced with discretion ; there is no man hath a virtue that he hath not a glimpse of ; nor any man an attainment, but he carries some stain of it : he is melancholy without cause, and merry against the hair : He hath the joints of everything, but everything so out of joint that he is a gouty Briareus, many hands and no use ; or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight.

As a genially satirical account of Jonson, this comes terribly near the mark ; and it constitutes a far keener thrust than the virulent caricature by Dekker in *Satiromastix*, where Jonson is presented as a bully and coward on the lines of his own Bobadill. There is no such venom in the Ajax portrait : Shakespeare had none ; and Jonson's ostensible reply in the dialogue appended to *The Poetaster* :

Only amongst them I am sorry for  
Some better natures by the rest so drawn  
To run in that vile line,

is worthy enough, though he certainly had been the aggressor. Thirteen years later, in *Bartholomew Fair*, he gibes anew at the "servant-master" in the *Tempest*. For him, Caliban was neither comedy nor tragedy.

But it is a complete error to suppose that Jonson was personally hostile to Shakespeare. His lines on the Poet-Ape, often quoted as evidence of such enmity, were launched at another mark: Dekker and Marston in the *Satiromastix* show that they both took the epithet to themselves; and it could be no false friend who penned the superb eulogy of the dead Shakespeare in the lines prefixed to the folio of the plays in 1623. Jonson of all men in that day was least likely to fail to see the supreme beauty of the great lines in the *Tempest*, however he might gird at the machinery or the characters of wonderland; and there is much reason to think that the friends, however each might banter the other on his differing bias, learned something from each other all along. There is great probability in the legend that Shakespeare secured the acceptance by his company of *Every Man in his Humour*: he was the man to see at once its new power in its own kind, and to admit that his own romantic comedy was not the last word in the lighter drama. After Jonson's new departure he significantly turns to tragedy; and between his comedy period and *Hamlet* he is seen to have reached a new power of blank verse. This, in turn, appears to be quickly reflected in *Sejanus* (1603), where Jonson shows a power to produce newly varied verse-rhythm above which he never afterwards rose. Even in his

later comedy, as in his masques, Ben betrays a craving after that charm of poetry in action which in Shakespeare was primordial; and which to-day delights men and women as it did in his own time. Perhaps Ben suspected that the pursuit of realism on his lines had, after all, not led him any nearer reality than *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, where no contemporary is lampooned, where the sun shines on the just and the unjust, and where real human nature runs joyously through plots framed to charm away care. On his *Poetaster* and *Cynthia's Revels*, with their tedious and obscure controversy, and their long-drawn censorious plan, he could hardly look back with pleasure.

Avowedly he had piqued himself upon "invention," refusing to avail himself, as did Shakespeare, of the mass of plots given to the playwright's hand in the *Palace of Pleasure* and other collections of Italian and French tales. Yet in the first draught of *Every Man in his Humour* he had given his characters Italian names in the usual way; and in point of fact he could not help copying the character-types of previous drama. His *Bobadill* is a variant of the Basilisco of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*; who, in turn, is modelled after the Captain Crackstone of the old *Two Italian Gentlemen*; who follows Italian types that go back to Plautus. It needed a more plastic and sympathetic faculty than Jonson's

to reflect from the medley of actual life at once convincing personalities and connected actions of a commanding interest.

Yet in the way of hard exaggerative photography it would be difficult to exceed the sardonic force of such plays as *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*; the first so perfect in structure, the second so overwhelming in its pell-mell of riotous, clamorous, vulgar life. And the other realistic plays of Jonson are only less remarkable for their laboured power. It is not life that we see in *Volpone* or in *The New Inn*: it is the massive effort of a determined censor of life to shape alternately a minatory and an attractive action, in one making life unnaturally odious, in another unnaturally charming. But if we were to measure the work solely by Ruskin's test of the "amount of mind to the square inch," we should have to place it high indeed. One secret of all great art is the absorption of the artist in his subject, and we can see Jonson grappled to his. His explosive defiance of such playwrights as Dekker and Marston came of his contemptuous sense of their relative levity of artistic temper, as well as of his wrath at *their* contemptuous retorts upon his own confident pretension to have the only right method; and in that contempt he never included Shakespeare, however he might deride romanticism as such. He knew



that no play of theirs was ever thought and wrought out as was the slightest of Shakespeare's. But he was slow to see that their irregular faculty was from time to time lit up by gleams of genius of a kind he did not possess. Perhaps a recognition of it underlay his reconciliation with Marston. In the case of Chapman his recognition had been prompt : the scholarship as well as the power and intensity of that kindred fighter was bound to win him.

Marston, Dekker, Heywood, Chapman, and Middleton all belong in their beginnings to Elizabeth's reign, and with Shakespeare and Jonson they form an unparalleled group. Dekker may have begun playwriting about 1594 or earlier ; Chapman about 1596 ; Marston and Heywood not till 1599 ; Middleton not till 1602. Of the five, Dekker had on the whole the happiest dramatic gifts, and the least happy life ; and though Jonson in cold blood called him a rogue, and even harder things have been said of him later, it is difficult to dislike him. In Lamb's view, he had " poetry enough for anything " ; and to read *Old Fortunatus* is to come near assenting. His *Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) shows the influence of Greene ; but it has a hearty and cheerful comedy strain which was approached by Greene only in *George-a-Greene* ; and which differentiates no less from the harder brilliance of Jonson. As a kindly picture of

old London trade life, touched with romanticism, it makes an appeal which the "Ho!" group of bustling Cockney comedies never do; the reason being that realism must be very well done indeed to attain artistic unity, while a romantic plot has a unifying force not so hard to attain.

No such interest attaches to the comedy of *Patient Grissel* (1599), in which Dekker collaborated with Chettle. That impossible heroine is here as incredible as in any other presentment of her, while the husband is gratuitously detestable; and the minor characters are unoriginal and unreal. Much more attractive is *Old Fortunatus*, a play telling of the example not only of Greene but of Marlowe, whose early verse is so often echoed that it is not possible confidently to reject the opinion that the First Part was written as early as 1590. In any case it belongs definitely to the pre-Jonsonian and romantic drama, in which some transcriptions from contemporary life are placed in a plot "out of space, out of time"; realism relieving fairy-tale, and prose relieving poetry. It cannot be said to attain greatness; but it has energy and originality enough to make us look for great work at its author's hands.

Only in a slight degree is the hope fulfilled. In *The Honest Whore* and *The Witch of Edmon-ton*, both written in collaboration, Dekker's original gift of kindly sympathy plays to

good purpose, though in the former the spirit of realism is burdened on the one hand by resort to the favourite Elizabethan form of extravaganza—madhouse scenes—and on the other by complication of plot. The artistic merit of the first play, in both parts, inheres in the title-character, who turns honest woman as the wife of the caitiff who had first wronged her and continues to wrong her as her husband. For the impossible conception of Grissel there is here substituted a possible one ; and the self-reclaimed sinner is a hundred times more lifelike than the all-enduring saint. No less convincing is the study of her father, sound all through as she was at heart, and therefore capable of heartily forgiving, when she has redeemed herself, the daughter who had shamed him. In such work as this, as in the better plays of Thomas Heywood, we have the clearest anticipation of the Victorian novel, wherein the reactions of character become the motive and basis of the performance, unhampered by the excrescences resulting from the supposed necessities of the Elizabethan theatre. Collaboration in Dekker's case meant a combination of plot motives, with a resulting loss of homogeneity ; but it would seem to be to his realistic talent that we owe the strong character-work of the play ; though the instability of critical taste which, no less than insecurity of genius, puts all the dramatists of the age upon a lower

plane than Shakespeare, was only too fully shared by Dekker.

It is on the general ground of his gift of sympathy, together with cues of style, that we are led to assign to him the most remarkable feature of *The Witch of Edmonton*, the partly sympathetic presentment of the title-character there. Only in Shakespeare's handling of Shylock do we have any such dramatic refinement upon popular prejudice as is here achieved in dealing with a figure much more familiar in England than the usurious Jew. That such a theme for real everyday tragedy was never taken up by the great master, is one of the grounds for regret as to the special directions given to his genius. In *Macbeth* the witches, perhaps copied from another play, are essentially supernatural and merely evil figures, as they had need be in a play that was to please the witch-fearing James I. It was left to Dekker to remind us—without venturing on a wholly sympathetic picture—how horribly the popular superstition wrought to create the monster of its imagination, breeding evil where it feared evil, and making a persecuted victim of its fancied persecutor.

But of this notable faculty there is no further notable fruit. Whether because of lack of gift on the part of the authors or the actors, or by reason of immaturity of taste among the public, realistic tragedy never

went far in either Elizabethan or Jacobean England. The predominant types were finally romantic tragedy and realistic comedy, with at times a tragical turn. *Arden of Feversham* and the *Warning for Fair Women* remain the only good plays of the kind : that entitled *Two Tragedies in One*, signed "Robert Yarrington," but probably the work of Chettle, Day, and Houghton, is clumsy work in comparison. *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, published as Shakespeare's in 1608, but certainly not from his hand as it stands, appears to be the work of George Wilkins, to whom is to be credited the inferior part of *Pericles*, so obviously divisible from the rest. It is conceivable that Wilkins may in *The Yorkshire Tragedy* have reduced to his own raw prose the higher prose or verse of the poet with whom in some fashion he took leave or was permitted to collaborate ; but the problem remains a very obscure one ; and we can but say that the theme, the downward course of a headstrong and passionate gambler, who ruins himself and murders his family, might have been made by Shakespeare a masterpiece of pity and terror.

Dekker, always living from hand to mouth, like most of his tribe, deteriorated in nearly every respect, and the bulk of his preserved work is not worth preserving. His life in large part anticipated the later sketch of the career of the hack—"toil, envy, want, the

patron and the jail"—with very little of the patron and a great deal of the jail. Thomas Heywood, the most fecund of all English dramatists, who appears to have lived to a ripe age in comparative prosperity, is not on the whole artistically luckier. To the Elizabethan time he belongs in respect of his *Four Prentices of London*—juvenile work on a juvenile theme; his two *Edward IV* plays, in which he handles the story of Jane Shore with a good deal of elaborated pathos, if not with tragic force; and his masterpiece, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, which was played in 1603. His tragically ending serious play matches well with Dekker's *Honest Whore*, though its central character has not the "observed" stamp of Dekker's best work. Like that, it suggests the germ of the Victorian novel, though it hints rather of *East Lynne* than of Thackeray or of George Eliot; and the lapse of its erring woman is the collapse of sheer weakness rather than the aberration of passionate will which makes the ground of the higher tragedy. Long afterwards, in *The English Traveller*, Heywood handled a variant of the same theme; and there, though the characterization is stronger, the presentment is psychologically unconvincing. Heywood's talent, in fine, was rather for pathos than for tragedy, and, in comedy, rather for good-humour than for humour. Some real light he does throw on

English life, albeit with uncertain hand. The wonder is that, producing the mass of playwriting he did, he so often attains a good level of efficiency. We have his own assurance, which there is no reason to doubt, that up to 1633 he had put his hand or "a main finger" to a hundred and twenty plays: a testimony which conveys anew the open secret of the economic determination, as to quantity and quality, of the bulk of the old drama. Heywood's output meant four plays a year, written or collaborated in, besides a number of poems and prose treatises. More prudence, and perhaps a little more industry than belonged to Dekker, enabled him to keep his head above water where the other so often went under. But not thus was greatness to be attained in drama. It was in respect of his income from his partnership in his theatre-company that Shakespeare was enabled to put out his full power in the latter half of his twenty or more years of playmaking. As a mere dramatist, he could not have lived by his writing.

It was presumably economic compulsion that drove George Chapman to playwriting, for which he was imperfectly gifted. His first signed play, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (1598), has no psychic or poetic merit, though it shows a certain fertility in devices of plot. Echoing Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, he had not yet found any fit path for himself in

drama, though he was about forty years old ; and not till he had done several realistic comedies, and collaborated with Jonson and Marston in *Eastward Ho*, in which an attack upon the Scots served to bring all three to prison, did he turn his hand to the form of tragedy in which he was able to make an original mark. That he did so while carrying on his great task of translating Homer is one of the proofs of his power, though he never produced a satisfying masterpiece. Far inferior to Shakespeare, inferior even to Jonson, in the power of " seeing life steadily and seeing it whole " ; inferior even to lesser men in the power to round and balance a play, he had in him the tragic spirit ; and he created truly tragic characters, compact of passion, however unduly given to complicated declamation. We cannot say of his tragedy, as of Jonson's, that it is cold. Yet on this path he falls behind Jonson in point of sanity and self-command. *Bussy d'Ambois*, in several respects his greatest work, is sadly flawed by an absurd use of the device of the ghost ; and he always lacks variety of characterization, though he often attains intensity. None of his comedy characters lives for us as several of Jonson's do, to say nothing of the comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher. Poet as he essentially was, he cannot touch with poetry his women in comedy, hardly even in tragedy ; and in



both orders alike he seems never to see his wood for the trees. With a great faculty for passionate but turgid rhetoric, he lacks that power of the arresting, lifelike phrase which in Webster at times recalls Shakespeare; and as an artist he remains for us what he shows himself to be in his first poems and his explosive prefaces, something volcanic, tumultuous, ill-coördinated: in Shakespeare's phrase, a "fierce thing replete with too much rage, whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart." Shakespeare, we feel, though we have not a tolerable portrait of him, had serene eyes; those of Jonson, in the authentic portrait, have an unexpected, luminous quality of reverie and self-possession; those of Chapman, in his, have the very rictus of angry self-assertion and self-will. Such a one could not hold the mirror up to nature, either dramatically or ratiocinatively, though he could flash lightning upon her at times. He is at his best, and is best to be remembered, in fine flights of moral poetry, as in the speech of King Henry in *Byron's Tragedy* (iv. 1):

O thou that govern'st the keen sword of kings,  
 Direct my arm in this important stroke,  
 Or hold it being advanc'd; the weight of blood,  
 Even in the basest subject, doth exact  
 Deep consultation in the highest king;  
 For in one subject, death's unjust affrights,  
 Passions and pains, though he be ne'er so poor,  
 Ask more remorse than the voluptuous spleens  
 Of all kings in the world deserve respect;

He should be born grey-headed that will bear  
The sword of empire.

No other dramatist within the Elizabethan limit, after Jonson, can be put wholly upon as high a plane. John Marston, who set out as a slashing satirist and an erotic poet, maintains in his plays some of the offensive qualities of style which repel in his early verse, making his characters talk with his own thrasonical violence. He cares nothing for the economies of drama, the technique of exposition and gradation; and his sudden rush of action is apt to be as hard to understand as a street fight. To this day, indeed, we cannot be sure as to his part in *The Malcontent* (1600?), twice published by the same bookseller in 1604, in the first edition 'as the work of Marston, in the second as by John Webster, with additions by Marston. We can but say that in this play, as in the earlier *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, there are passages of harmonious verse of a brooding, pregnant power which seem to be the result of Marston's appreciative listening to Shakespeare, and were apparently not within the capacity of Webster, whose tragic gift was not seconded by any genius for the handling of his verse instrument.

Webster and the other principal dramatists who carried on the work of the theatres—Rowley, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Philip Massinger—are wholly outside our

period ; and cannot be here surveyed in any detail, though an established convention makes the label of Elizabethan drama stretch down to the reign of Charles, and cover the work of James Shirley, who made plays from 1625 till the closing of the theatres under the Commonwealth. Taking the post-Elizabethan drama as a whole down to that terminus, we can hardly refuse assent to the general verdict that it is marked by the profusion of decay ; though we must not let the metaphor carry for us the implication that an art-form is as it were originally doomed to degeneration and death, like a plant or an animal. Given arts advance and decline in different periods and countries in terms of the total conditions, among which the existence of genius is not to be posited as conveying the whole explanation. Original genius, for one thing, after a time recoils from an art-form that has become conventional. Genius, for another thing, may exist potentially without being evoked ; and in the evocation there is always the element of untraced causation, which we call "chance."

Perhaps the sociology of the matter may be reasonably indicated thus. The dramatic efflorescence of the last fifteen or twenty years of Elizabeth's reign was one of the results of a rapid fertilization of the English intelligence by a variety of forms of foreign culture, under fostering social and economic conditions,

which brought together a handful of playwrights of varying degrees of genius, one of them supremely gifted. To his topmost height, no one else ever attained. In the next age, new culture of the required kind did not pour in as before. There are many testimonies to the effect that in the eyes of foreign scholars the English intellect under James turned to reactionary theology. But that absorption and the concomitant political tension meant, among other things, the turning of vigorous minds in an increasing degree away from *belles lettres* and towards problems of creed and action. Above all, the constant record of the playwriting career was one of hardship, of toil which brought no monetary competence, of irksome dependence on private bounty. Jonson had relatively high earning power in various kinds; but like all the dramatists who had no partnership in the theatres, he was chronically short of funds, and had to solicit gifts. Massinger was only less impecunious than Dekker. This tale of hardship was not likely to attract judicious men; and the purely artistic temperament is no guarantee for good sense. Beaumont and Fletcher, indeed, were both "well-born," the first being the son of a judge, the second the son of a bishop; and they presumably did not feel the pressure of want; but they both died young, Beaumont in 1616, Fletcher in 1625. After that date,

serious people were increasingly indifferent or hostile to the theatre; and plays were written for less critical and thoughtful audiences. Thus the standard of taste declined with the decline in the quality of the recruits to the profession of playmaking.

It is a mistake to say, as some do, that the later playwrights were necessarily driven to violent and unnatural or corrupt effects by a sheer exhaustion of good themes. It is true that the post-Elizabethan drama runs noticeably to sexual grossness. Some of the situations in Heywood's *Golden Age* and in Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* (circa 1609), outgo in immodesty anything in the older drama, apart from *Titus Andronicus*; and Fletcher in particular is chronically prurient. In the *Shepherdess* we have a strangely hypocritical masquerade of corruptness playing at purity, an abundance of dainty poetry punctuated with gross action, and a winding up of a coarse and silly plot with a series of moral allocutions from the mouths of the Priest of Pan and a satyr. It is a far cry from the *Midsummer Night's Dream* to this indecent "morality play," which partly parodies it. Its failure might seem to vindicate the taste of the audiences; but Fletcher's later work tells rather of a lowering of their standards, as if the decent people had at length stayed away. But the other symptoms cited as degenerate were nothing new. Violent and

unnatural effects were abundantly sought for by dramatists of the "first flight." *Tamburlaine* presents them; the *Spanish Tragedy*, *Selimus*, *Locrine*, *Tancred and Gismunda*, and *David and Bethsabe*, rival any later play in sheer savagery and hideous action; *Titus Andronicus*, which is not Shakespeare's, is an accumulation of sickening atrocities; and *Alphonsus Emperor of Germany*, heedlessly ascribed to Chapman, but really an early play, probably by Greene or Kyd and Peele, runs it hard. Ford and Cyril Tourneur, author of *The Atheist's Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* in the next generation, were men of neurotic proclivity, but they were not made so by dearth of good tragic plot material. Had Shakespeare taken up the theme of Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* he would have made a play no less tragic, yet without conveying the sense of supererogation in horror that is set up by Webster's tragedy. Webster was in truth a dramatist with a very keen sense of the wild play of evil in life; but he would have been so if he had written twenty years earlier. Massinger took an extremely repulsive subject in *The Unnatural Combat*; and Chapman dabbled much in violence; but in *The Admiral of France* he found a theme in no sense odious.

In some respects there was actual development in dramatic technique and capacity among the new men in Shakespeare's closing

years, and later. The author of *Othello* and *Lear* would doubtless have acknowledged new forms of power in Webster; and the complicated plots of the *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* seem to show that he took note of the new developments of plot interest in the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, and even of Dekker. It is not to be denied, again, that a number of the young men and women of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies tell of a new and felicitous power of portraying contemporary types. In those comedies, as in Porter's *Two Angry Women of Abington* (1598), we catch more glimpses of everyday English people in their actual environment than Shakespeare has vouchsafed us. Comedy, as we saw, steadily headed towards realism and native life from Jonson onwards. But in tragedy there was no equivalent advance: Fletcher and Massinger alike sought their tragic plots in remote history or imaginary communities; and for lack of moral sanity and true poetic imagination they there fell below the level of their achievement in comedy, to say nothing of the mighty tragedy of Shakespeare.

Above all there was retrogression rather than advance in the great art of blank verse. Marston and Dekker caught something of the rhythmic secrets of Shakespeare; and Beaumont seems to have recognized that his was the ideal touch; but where Fletcher works

alone he soon falls away ; and Massinger, who was less of a lyrist, does still worse. Dramatic blank verse, herein failing to assimilate the technique of Surrey, had begun with a mechanical "end-stopped" line, usually closing dutifully on a monosyllable ; from which monotony, before Shakespeare, it began to find some relief in a dissyllabic close ; still, however, without running on the clause. Soon Shakespeare assimilated the double-ending, and soon he followed up that with the run-on line, in which the clause did not coincide with the rhythmic bar-measurement. Thus, duly balancing double with single endings, he brought blank verse to the perfection of fluidity and ever varying pulsation. Jonson, though partly ready to see the value of the varying pause, for lack of delicacy of ear lapsed into new monotones by framing long series of lines ending in dissyllables ; and Chapman, Fletcher, and Massinger all fell into the same snare. In *Bussy d'Ambois*, for instance (v, 2), we have one run of eight such endings, and in *Every Man in his Humour* (i, 1) a sequence of seven ; a monotony of effect which only a proportionately energetic variation of pause could cure. But while those poets do frequently vary their pauses, they seem to have no perception of their monotones of line-ending, and are thus incalculably disadvantaged with all readers sensitive to rhythm. It would seem that for



purposes of the stage, where blank verse is so seldom well delivered, the monotony did not count ; but the lower standard of technique can be seen among the less strenuous men to react on the whole work of composition.

Fletcher's case at first sight seems to be that of a man sinning against light ; for if the blank verse in the first scene of *The Faithful Shepherdess*, signed by him, be his, he began well. But in terms of the general critical agreement that in the joint plays his work is to be distinguished by the monotonous double endings, we are led to suspect that the small quantity of blank verse in that early piece is Beaumont's, and that Fletcher signed it on the strength of having written the rhymed verse which constitutes nine-tenths of the whole. It would seem, in short, that with all his grace in rhyme and song he lacked the special faculty required for the right management of the more difficult technique. The fact that, as the preface to the *Shepherdess* shows, he could write a more finely modulated prose than any produced by Shakespeare, is quite in keeping with that inference. In any case, he is a "decadent" in blank verse.

To this falling away in sheer workmanship the playgoing public seems to have been insensitive ; and the practitioners themselves were quite complacent. Shirley, writing a

prefatory address in the folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher in 1647, speaks of them as the supreme dramatists, and of their work as "the greatest monument of the scene that time and humanity have produced." Shirley was simply an inferior workman, who, himself incapable of good verse or good drama, could not see the vices of Fletcher's. The strong men were otherwise occupied. Milton, who in the darkened evening of his days was to show anew what blank verse in a great artist's hand could be, might have told his countrymen the truth; but Milton, in his youth the enraptured votary of Shakespeare, whose art he best of all men could appraise, was now up to the neck in the political and ecclesiastical warfare which put a space of desolation between the old drama and all later literature.

Taking that drama in the mass, we find it to consist, perforce, very largely of un leisured, hand-to-mouth work; even the greatest master being saddled with a good deal of poor stuff, some of it not even retouched by him; while the ablest of his rivals and successors are to be enjoyed only in selections of their more fortunate pieces. But still the old drama remains the most remarkable mass of literary production in modern history down to the nineteenth century. Its sheer mass is astonishing, especially when we realize that there was far more of unpublished than of pub-

lished work. The total list of plays of which we have copies or documentary mention runs towards two thousand ; and even if we count the lost plays as mostly worse than the saved, they still stand collectively, with the others, for a signal effort of constructive imagination. And their particular form was never recovered after it was worked out in the period before the Civil War : the blankverse drama of the Restoration and the eighteenth century never attains even to a second place as compared with the earlier mass ; and the poetic drama of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries remains but an academic imitation. Not till the great development of the novel in the nineteenth century do we find an equivalent imaginative effort to that made in the preserved drama of Shakespeare's age, or a similar energy in the artistic reproduction of life. That is to say, the old drama is in respect of its time the more remarkable evolution of the two. In its typical form, it grew to a dazzling maturity of power within some twenty years, at the close of a century in which at the outset the national literature was but getting its " fore-parts " out of the soil of the Middle Ages. The culture which acted as the nutriment of the later growth is insignificant in comparison with that which went to the nourishment of nineteenth-century fiction in England as in France. In respect of this

signal precocity, as well as of the sheer power of the performance in general, it continues to command the wondering interest not only of the English but of other peoples, who find its vitality as incontestable as its faults.

The fact that it is centred by one of the great geniuses of all literature does not make the totality less memorable: indeed, we might almost apply to that, as a whole, the figure in which Diderot maintained against Voltaire the supremacy of Shakespeare: it is to the coeval drama of the rest of Europe almost as was the rude colossal statue of St. Christopher in old Paris to the men around, whose stature permitted them to walk between its legs. Not till Corneille did French drama attain to an approximate intellectual vigour; not till Calderon did that of Spain rise to literary greatness; and neither in the too fertile Calderon nor in Corneille is there any approach to the wide range of theme and treatment attained by the English stage before their time. The Elizabethan drama, in fine, is the outstanding literary monument of its age, and one of the most notable episodes in all literary history.

Later times have made much of their intellectual sensations; but it may be left to any lover of sheer literature to say whether any of these are to be matched with the experience of men who in the space of some dozen years could go successively to "first

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nights" in which they could hear for the first time the lines of Lorenzo :

In such a night  
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand  
Upon the wild sea banks, and waved her love  
To come again to Carthage ;

and Hamlet's

Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon—

and Macbeth's

Methought I heard a voice cry " Sleep no more ! " ;

and the death-hailing Cleopatra's

Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have  
Immortal longings in me ; now no more  
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip ;

and Perdita's

Daffodils  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty ;

and Prospero's mighty period. For us to whom such things are radiances from the past, there is the consolation of surmising that after all no one in that day, probably, delighted in them quite so much as we can.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

## CHAPTER I.—GENERAL SURVEYS

THE fullest record of English literary history yet produced is the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, now in progress, which is to cover the whole field. In the volume of Prof. Saintsbury on *Elizabethan Literature* (Macmillan) there are many just judgments. Of compact surveys, the handbook of Thomas Seacombe and J. W. Allen, *The Age of Shakespeare* (2 vols.: Bell), is perhaps the most useful to the student. Prof. F. E. Schelling's *Elizabethan Drama, 1558-1642* (Constable: 2 vols., 1911), is a full yet concise record.

## CHAPTER II.—PROSE BEFORE SIDNEY

In the first vol. of the rearranged ed. of Prof. Arber's "English Garner" (Constable, 12 vols.) is a useful collection of *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, edited by A. W. Pollard. The early Protestant prose writers are easily to be procured second-hand at low prices, in the reprints of the Parker Society. "Arber's Reprints" (Constable) include the translations of Richard Eden on *The Newe India* (large 4to); and the rearranged "Garner" includes 2 vols. of *Voyages and Travels* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* is rep. in "Tudor and Stuart Library" (Clar. Press, 1909); and Hoby's trans. of the *Cortigiano* in the "Tudor Translations."

## CHAPTER III.—POETRY BEFORE SPENSER

*Tottel's Miscellany* is among "Arber's Reprints." Wyatt's and Surrey's Poems are reprinted in the "Aldine" series. Arber's *Surrey and Wyatt Anthology* and *Spenser Anthology* give a general selection. Gascoigne's Works are now well edited by Professor John W. Cunliffe (2 vols.: Camb. Univ. Press). Barnabe Googe's poems are among "Arber's Reprints"; and Howell's *Devises* have been included in the "Tudor and Stuart Library."

## CHAPTER IV.—SPENSER

A fully annotated edition of Spenser is one of the great desiderata of English literary history, but the Globe ed. and that of Smith and De Selincourt (Frowde) give good introductions, glossaries, and notes of variant readings. Among the best critical essays on Spenser are those of Prof. Mackail (in *The Springs of Helicon*: Longmans, 1909); Lowell (in *Among my Books*, rep. in *English Poets*, "Camelot Classics"), and Minto (in *Characteristics of English Poets*: Blackwood).

## CHAPTER V.—PRE-SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

Professor A. W. Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne* (revised ed., 3 vols., 1899: Macmillan) is the standard treatise of the kind. The volumes on *English Miracle Plays*, by A. W. Pollard (1890), and on *Early English Classical Tragedies*, by Prof. J. W. Cunliffe (1912: both Clar. Press), give good texts and introductions.

Apart from the various collected editions of Lilly, Kyd, Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, a number of single plays by these authors are produced in the "Temple" series, as are *Selimus*, *Arden of Feversham*, and *Edward III.* Others are reprinted by the Malone

Society. Of the "Shakespeare Apocrypha"—the plays ascribed falsely, or on the score of portions, to Shakespeare—the best collection is that edited by C. F. Tuckerbrooke (Clar. Press, 1908) with introduction, notes, and bibliography. As to the authorship of *Arden of Feversham*, see Mr. Charles Crawford's *Collectanea*, 1st Series (Stratford, 1906).

#### CHAPTER VI.—THE GREAT PROSE

Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* and the *Fight of the Revenge* are among Arber's cheap reprints: the *Arcadia* is included in the "Cambridge English Classics" series. Of Florio's Montaigne there are reprints by Routledge and Dent: of Holland's trans. of Plutarch's *Moralia* a selection in one vol. is included in the "Everyman's Library." Nashe is admirably edited by Mr. M'Kerrow (4 vols.: Bullen).

#### CHAPTER VII.—POETRY AFTER SPENSER

Cheap reprints of Daniel and Drayton are lacking; but Daniel is edited in 5 vols. by Grosart (1885-6). Drayton's *Polyolbion* and *Harmony of the Church* were reprinted in 1876 (3 vols.: Russell Smith), and other poems, by Collier, in 1856. Prof. O. Elton's monograph on Drayton (1905) is excellent. The sonnets of Drayton and Daniel, and the other collections of the period, are included in Arber's "English Garner." Chapman's *Minor Poems* fill one vol. of the three-vol. ed. by Shepherd. Campion is best edited by Mr. Bullen, who has also made charming collections from the Elizabethan song-books.

#### CHAPTER VIII.—SHAKESPEARE

The Globe editions and that of Craig (Frowde) supply careful texts; and the "Arden" edition (Methuen) presents a full *apparatus criticus* for each of the plays singly. In the matter of æsthetic criticism, the student may usefully start with Coleridge's Lectures (Bell) and Lamb's essay *On Shakespeare's Tragedies*, and go on to Prof. A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Macmillan)—the finest work ever done in that field. The best short monograph is that of Prof. Sir Walter Raleigh ("Men of Letters" series). Sir Sidney Lee's *Life* most fully covers the ground; but that by the late F. G. Fleay, as also that writer's *Shakespeare Manual*, should be studied by those concerned to know the history of the plays.

#### CHAPTER IX.—PROSE FICTION

*Euphues* is available in Arber's reprint: Greene's works are collected only in the 14-vol. edition of Grosart. But *Menaphon* is included in Arber's "English Scholar's Library"; *Pandosto* in Hazlitt's "Shakespeare Library"; and the *Groatworth of Wit* in the New Sh. Soc. "Shakespeare Allusion Books," Pt. I., 1874. Lodge's works have been collected only in the scarce and expensive Hunterian Society rep., edited by Dr. Gosse; but *Rosalynde* is in Hazlitt's "Shakespeare Library," and in the "Shakespeare Classics" series (Chatto). *Forbonius and Priscera* is in one of the old Sh. Soc. vols. of reprints, with other items. Deloney's Works are edited in one vol. by Mr. F. O. Mann (Clar. Press).

#### CHAPTER X.—THE LATER DRAMATISTS

Most of these are easily procurable in various editions; and select plays from most are included in the "Mermaid" series.

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